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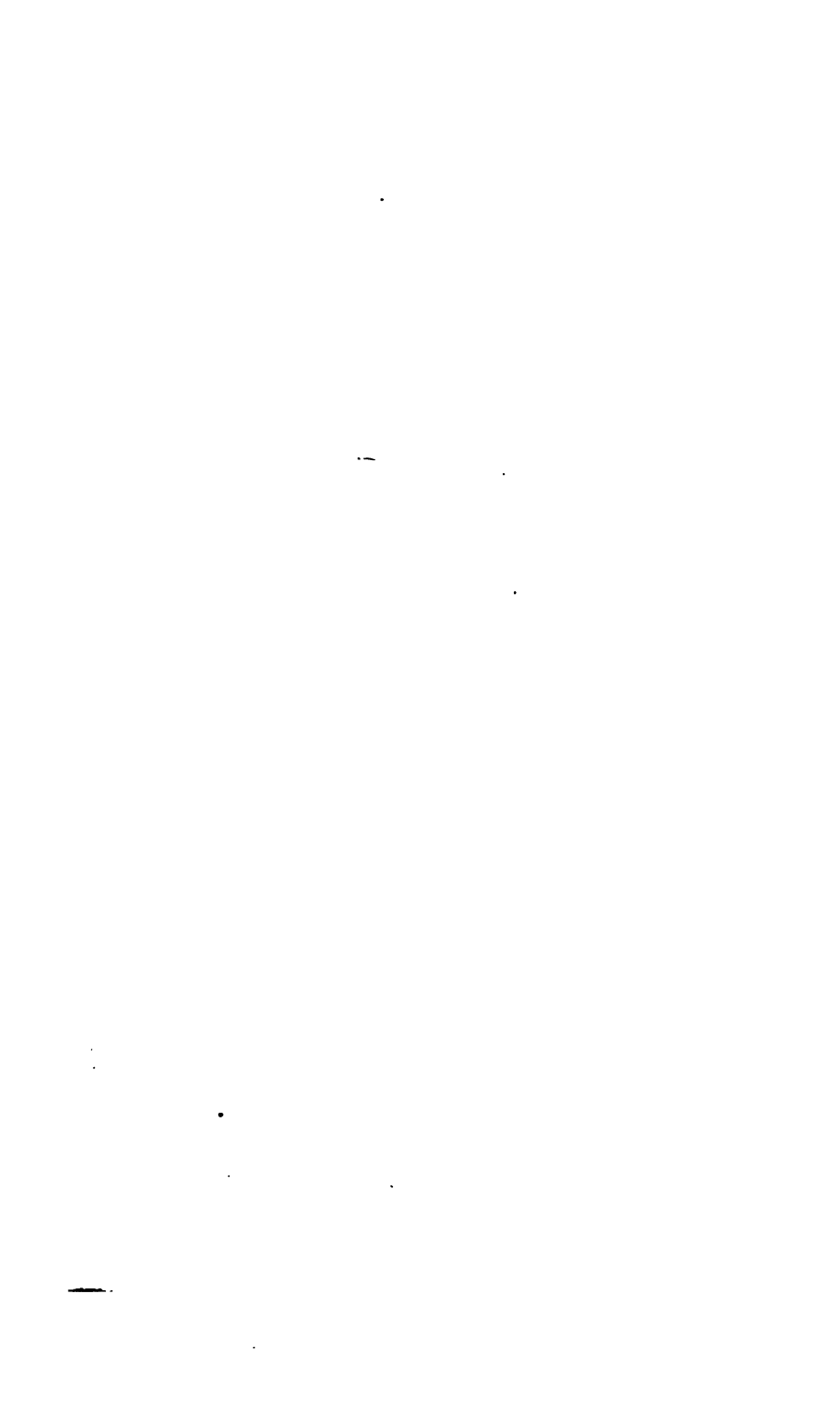
Miss. C. Baker  
with the respect of  
W. Smith



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Miss E. Baker  
with the respect of  
W. Smith



# SELECT SERMONS

OF THE

REV. WORTHINGTON SMITH, D.D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY

REV. JOSEPH TORREY, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE memorial volume here offered to the reader has been prepared at the urgent request of many friends of President Smith. It has been felt that some such tribute was due to a man who had contributed so largely and for so long a time to the interests of religion and learning in the State of his adoption, and that the example of his life and a few of his public discourses would be of value to the religious public.

The Memoir has been prepared, as a labor of love, by Rev. Dr. Torrey. His acquaintance with Dr. Smith, beginning at an early period, and continued through life, left nothing to be desired as a means of knowing and appreciating his character; while many details, that might otherwise have

escaped his notice, were kindly furnished by Mrs. Smith and other friends.

The selection of sermons has been made, in the main, with the advice and concurrence of Dr. Torrey. The few here printed have been selected out from a large number perhaps equally worthy; some at the desire of friends who had been interested in them when first delivered, and others because expressive of the views of Dr. Smith on some important topic, or as illustrative of his peculiar habits of thought. With very trifling exceptions, the sermons are printed as originally delivered. A very few words and phrases only have been changed, such as one on reviewing his own composition might make for the sake of perspicuity.

The writer of this preface, who has had this work in charge, and seen it through the press, is responsible for the titles given to the different sermons, and the order of their arrangement in this volume, and also for any errors that a more careful supervision might have avoided. It is hoped that these errors will not be found very numerous, or such as to impair its value, though in some degree incidental to a volume printed at a distance from the residence of the editor.

Acknowledgments are due to many friends for their assistance, — to Mr. J. E. Goodrich, for his good offices in securing the best form and place of publication ; to Dr. Stevens, Rev. B. B. Newton, and others at St. Albans, and to the Alumni of the University elsewhere, for their aid in securing subscriptions.

N. G. C.

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, January 22, 1861.



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# MEMOIR

OF

DR. WORTHINGTON SMITH.

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WORTHINGTON SMITH, the subject of this biographical sketch, was born in Hadley, Massachusetts, October 11th, 1795. He might claim to be descended from the most ancient family in that town ; for there, and on the spot where he was born, his ancestors had lived, from sire to son, through five successive generations, — the first Smith having established himself in the centre of the town, in 1659.<sup>1</sup> This was about the time of the first settlement of Hadley, and the same year in which the Rev. John Russel was installed as pastor over the newly-formed church. The original farm extended from what is now the main street of the village of South Hadley to

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above, I have ascertained that this ancestor was Lieutenant Samuel Smith, one of the pilgrim fathers of New England. He was born in England in 1598, and died in Hadley in 1680. Lieutenant Samuel Smith was one of the colony from Wethersfield, who, with their pastor, the Rev. Mr. Russel, made the first settlement in Hadley. The descendants in direct line from Samuel Smith were, 1. Chileab Smith, who died in 1731, aged 95 ; 2. Capt. Luke Smith, who died in 1747, aged 81 ; 3. Dea. Jona. Smith, died 1774, aged 73 ; 4. Deacon Seth Smith, the father of Worthington Smith. The first of this line must have been over 60 at the time of the settlement of Hadley, and her son Chileab already 23. It was a family remarkable for longevity, — the average of the lives preceding Dr. Smith being more than 80 years.

the banks of Connecticut River, and still remains in the possession of members of the family.

Worthington Smith was born in the house belonging to this farm which stands on the village green; where his parents, Deacon Seth Smith and Lydia his wife, continued to reside while they lived.<sup>1</sup> They were persons of great worth — living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; and in the church, which they served for many years in all good works, their memory is still precious. The late pastor of the church, who boarded in this family for several of the early years of his ministry, says of the venerable deacon, that “the few last years of his exemplary life were chiefly spent in religious acts and doing good, and that he died in old age with great peace and even triumph; and of his amiable wife, that, long distinguished for her humble Christian walk, she soon followed her husband to that unknown world beyond the grave.”<sup>2</sup> The writer of this sketch had once — in 1821, during a short visit to his friend and classmate then residing in his father’s family — the pleasure of seeing this venerable couple, for so, even then, they might be called. He still retains a very distinct impression of the patriarchal look of the old gentleman, — a person of small stature, as compared with his son, but one who knew how to “rule his children and his own house well,” as he quietly showed by taking the lead himself at the family devotions.

But the point which chiefly distinguished the elders of this well-ordered household, and for which they were known far and wide, was their loving observance of the duty of Christian hospitality. They were “careful

<sup>1</sup> The house, considerably more than a hundred years old, is now the residence of Dr. Smith’s youngest brother.

<sup>2</sup> Letters from Rev. Dr. Woodbridge to Mrs. Smith.

to entertain strangers," those of the clerical profession in particular, in so much that their house came to be regarded as a sort of "ministers' house." And here doubtless — as it may be remarked by the way — was fostered the elements of the same disposition as it appeared afterwards in their son Worthington, — that unfeigned respect and love for his brethren in the ministry, together with a habit of extending to them on all occasions personal services and the hospitalities of his home without stint and without grudging.

The children of the family were seven sons and a daughter;<sup>1</sup> and of the sons, the subject of this memoir was the youngest. He was named *Worthington* after the family-name of his grandmother on his mother's side. A word respecting the Worthington family will not be out of place here. All of this name in the United States, as appears from a note by Dr. Sprague in his *Annals of the American Pulpit*,<sup>2</sup> "were probably descended from Nicholas Worthington, a man of the times of the Commonwealth, and a soldier under Cromwell, who, after having lost a part or the whole of his estate by confiscation, came to this country about 1650, settled first in Hatfield, Massachusetts, and afterwards removed to Hartford in Connecticut." It is a fact worth noticing, that several Smiths, belonging probably to different families of this name, could trace back their lineage to him as their emigrant ancestor. John Cotton Smith, late Governor of Connecticut, was a son of the Rev. Cotton Mather Smith, who married a Worthington. The Rev. Ethan Smith, of Hopkinton, New Hampshire, was a son of Deacon Elijah and Sibbil (Worthington) Smith,<sup>3</sup> of Belchertown, Massachusetts;

<sup>1</sup> Now Mrs. Gadcomb, of St. Albans.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I. p. 501.

<sup>3</sup> A Mrs. Sibbil Worthington Smith, who was great-aunt to Dr. Smith,

and finally, our Dr. Worthington Smith, who deserved to write the two names together in his own, was descended from the same stock on his mother's side.

The eldest son of the seven was the Rev. Seth Smith, who was educated at Yale College, and afterwards settled and remained for a long time, even to the close of his life, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Genoa, Cayuga county, New York, where he died, 1849. He was ten years older than his brother Worthington, and it was doubtless by his example, if not owing directly to his counsel and encouragement, that the latter was induced, at a very early period, to shape his course to the end of obtaining a college education. The following account of the character of this excellent man and faithful brother, to whose friendly aid, in various ways, our Worthington Smith ever felt himself to be greatly indebted, is from one who thoroughly knew him. "He was a well-instructed scribe in the mysteries of the divine kingdom, and a pattern of all the virtues which adorn the sacred profession. He died suddenly, a few years ago, greatly lamented, and his memory is still precious to multitudes who once marked his meekness combined with firmness, his calmness without apathy, his zeal for the truth without bitterness, his uncompromising strictness without obstinacy, his gentleness without weakness, and his ability and fidelity in preaching the gospel, without the smallest approach to that disrespectful impudence which sets at defiance all the order and laws of civility and courtesy."<sup>1</sup>

I have said that Worthington Smith felt himself to be greatly indebted to his brother Seth. This he grate-

being sister of his maternal grandmother, lived in Hadley and died there, aged 103. Doubtless the same person with the one mentioned above.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Dr. Woodbridge, in a letter to Mrs. Smith.

fully acknowledged in a discourse delivered on the occasion of his brother's death, before his own congregation (several of whom were relations of the deceased), where, after paying a just tribute to the rare excellence of the man, and to his preëminent qualities as a Christian minister, he feelingly expressed his own personal and life-long obligation to him, as one whose kindness towards him had ever combined the cordial sympathy of a brother with the judicious counsels of a father.

The same hand which drew, from personal knowledge, the above portraiture of the Rev. Seth Smith, has furnished the following account of Worthington as he appeared in his boyhood. "I remember your husband in his youth," says Dr. Woodbridge, in a letter to Mrs. Smith, "as of a bright and agreeable demeanor, prone to study, thoughtful, and with no apparent tendency to any form of youthful indecorum. That there were faults in his character, I cannot doubt; for he was by nature, like all other men, dead in trespasses and sins, and a child of wrath, even as others; but what his specific faults were, if I ever knew, I do not now recollect. Perhaps, however, I might say, that one of the most noticeable of his failings was that with which young America is by no means chargeable — the extreme of diffidence and reserve." This reserved disposition, which so strongly marked his childhood and youth, went with him, in a measure, through life, without being ever entirely overcome by the more social and companionable habits which he afterwards cultivated.

His preparatory studies for college, commencing at an early period, were pursued partly at the Hadley Grammar School, partly under the care of Dr. Hyde, of Lee, and finally in the family and under the superintendence of his brother Seth, in Genoa, New York. He seems to have



remained under the care of his excellent brother until the autumn of 1813, when he was admitted at Williams College, as a member of the Sophomore class. Whatever may have been the motive for thus entering a year in advance, it could not have been any fear of his ability to withstand the temptations of college life, for an unusually manly character was the marked feature of his early youth. Perhaps a desire to retain him as long as possible under the healthful influence of a pious and watchful elder brother, who was as competent, to say the least, as any tutor to direct him in the studies of the first college year, induced his friends to take this course, which doubtless harmonized also with his own inclinations; for, as we have seen, there was no mortal whom he so loved and trusted as he did this brother. He entered a class small in numbers, but reputable for talents and character.

Some time in the spring of 1816, when he was in his senior year, he came home to Hadley to spend a short vacation, and found the church in that place enjoying a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. It was then that his own mind, always thoughtful in regard to his need of a personal and saving interest in Christ, was more strongly than ever impressed with the importance of securing that interest for himself, while the Spirit of God, evidently shed forth, was translating many, and some of them his associates and friends, from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.

But these anxieties, and the struggle going on within his own mind, were carefully kept to himself. He would confide them to no human sympathy. He neither sought counsel, nor by the betrayal of a look invited it, from any one. Meantime his parents, with unwonted

importunity, were praying in secret places that he might be transformed from the image of the earthly into that of the heavenly; and their anxiety increased as the time for his return to college drew near. Finally the time arrived, and then, unexpectedly to his friends, he expressed his intention to remain in Hadley for the present, stating as his motive that the Holy Spirit had long been striving with him, and this might be the last time the offer of reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ would be so plainly made to him. Not many days after this he avowed his hope in Christ, and found peace in believing.<sup>1</sup>

He returned to college; but at the next communion season in Hadley he came home again to make *there* a public profession of his faith in Christ, preferring to do this in the place which had thus witnessed his first and his second birth, and to connect himself with a church which numbered among its members his ancestors for so many generations.

That this was to him no formal thing merely, but a very solemn and well-considered act of self-consecration, is quite evident. Dr. Woodbridge, then pastor of the church, and who was present at the time, remarks of it: "I have no distinct recollection of the order and strength of the religious exercises at the period of his hopeful conversion, except that they were satisfactory, as related by himself, and that he was received with universal approval to the communion of the church. His subsequent life of constancy and fidelity set the seal to the genuineness of that profession by which he was then separated from the world in its delusions, its pomps, its vanities, and its forbidden pleasures. Who ever wit-

<sup>1</sup> Facts supplied by Mrs. Smith.

nessed in him an act inconsistent with the gravity, the sobriety, the cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will, becoming a follower of the Lamb? He could be pleasant, and even innocently mirthful; but never, I have reason to believe, did he lose sight of the proprieties of his situation as a member of the church, and a herald of the cross to guilty men.”<sup>1</sup>

Having thus consecrated himself to God and the church just at the period when most young men at college are thinking seriously about their plans for future life, young Smith felt no perplexity or hesitation in choosing his, but dedicated himself at once to the service of his Divine Master in the ministry of the gospel. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1816, and only a few weeks after his graduation at Williams College, he entered upon his course of theological study at Andover. Here I first became acquainted with him, and had opportunity of knowing him, as members of the same class generally know each other. There was in this class a very respectable representation of men from Williams College; not all graduates of the same year, nor exactly upon a par in point of scholarship and attainments, while they differed remarkably in many points of character; but they were all talented and worthy men, who attained, nearly every one of them, to some sort of distinction in after-life. Their more obvious traits, in the free intercourse of students with each other, were soon well known to all: the more latent worth of each was not so fully appreciated. It took no long time to find out the conversational talent, the strong feeling for the lofty and imaginative in one, the decided linguistic and philological turn of another, the neat and logical accuracy of

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Smith.

a third. To make out clearly what constituted the peculiar talent and bent of our fellow-student Smith was not so easy. He was about the most reserved man among us. Sometimes, however, his voice would be heard in a debate, or an argument, when we would pause to listen. A certain gravity of manner, justified by the plain good sense of his remarks; a certain comprehensive way which he had of "sounding the merits of a case," were his most noticeable characteristics.

In the purely philological and exegetical studies which then occupied a good part of the first year in the Andover course,—Hebrew being studied from the first elements, and the Greek of the New Testament with a more special reference to interpretation,—I do not remember that he ever attempted to distinguish himself. While some of his classmates—Jonas King, for instance, who was also his classmate in college—pushed their Hebrew studies much further than had before been customary in the institution, even into the perhaps more curious than profitable lore concerning the accents, and were not satisfied without some knowledge, such as the imperfect helps then to be obtained would allow, of the several cognate dialects, Smith, more modestly, if not more judiciously, aspired only to secure a practical ability to consult the original Scriptures for himself. He had no ambition whatever to excel in this species of learning. At the same time, he entertained no contempt for it. Not one, I venture to say, better appreciated and relished than he did the somewhat rambling, but always interesting and instructive, talks of our able instructor in this department.

Sacred philology we were taught to regard as the basis of a true theological education. It seemed necessary to reiterate and impress deeply this maxim, at the

time when a new method of theological study, or at least a method new for this country, was initiated by the noble zeal and untiring industry of Professor Stuart. Revealed religion, indeed every actual religion that has shown power enough to influence men, is of the nature of a fact rather than of a theory. Christianity reposes entirely on a great fact — the central one of all history. The Bible, in the very language in which it was first written, is the only authentic record of it. To be certain of having the text of this Bible, then, as nearly as possible in its original state, and to understand how to make out the sense of the text by just rules of interpretation, would seem, indeed, to be all-important prerequisites, without which it would be little less than presumption for any man to claim to be able to teach and expound truth from the oracles of God. Such were the views impressed upon us by the general teachings of one whose memory will always be dear to the many who from him took their first and abiding direction in theological inquiries.

Our classmate Smith felt the spell of this influence, — as, indeed, who could escape it? — and the choicest books in his small library, those on which the dust never accumulated, were always the sacred volumes in the original, and the best books he could procure for their elucidation. But what do the Scriptures teach, not here and there merely, but as one connected and coherent system of doctrine, was, after all, the great question with him. In attempting the careful solution of this question, the calm, reflective, reasoning mind of our friend Smith found itself in its element. With doubts of a rationalistic tendency, I do not think he was ever much troubled. He had always lived in an entirely different atmosphere, where such doubts had never yet intruded. He felt too

deeply the power of the great and fundamental doctrines of the cross in his own heart; but his naturally strong judgment and broad comprehension of mind forbade his ever resting upon the mere letter. He was for bringing each revealed truth into reconciliation with every other, but without straining anything through compliance with that interest. He was a fair man in an argument, and without the least spice of obstinacy. He never wished to avoid difficulties which ought to be met, nor to smooth them over, but preferred rather to see them at their worst, and he, if he could not solve them, would manfully acknowledge it. He was candid, sincere, and open to conviction; a patient listener, having an opinion of his own, yet ever willing and ready to be taught better; modestly trustful in his own power of discernment, but without the least show of self-conceit. I am now speaking of what our friend Smith was at Andover, and as a *student* of theology. He was all that I have said *then*. A sound judgment, reposing on a broad foundation of natural good sense, was, perhaps, the fundamental trait in his intellectual character. And this, which was the distinguishing faculty with him, sanctified and clarified, as we have reason to believe it was, by divine grace, prepared and predisposed him to become a sound theologian. In our class discussions before Dr. Woods, during the second year at Andover, when the study of theology was made the principal thing, I do not remember that Mr. Smith ever took any very active part. His silence may have been owing to his natural reserve. I am inclined to believe, however, that he was influenced also, quite as much, by a nice sense of propriety; that he considered it the part of the beginner, in the presence of a master in theology, rather to get at the truth as the latter could unfold it, than to dispute either

with him or before him. It is not strange, perhaps, that young men who have never as yet sounded the depths of the problems which theology is continually bringing before them, should sometimes presume too much on the competency of their comparatively unpractised understandings to grapple with questions lying beyond the furthest reach of mere understanding. But in studying this science, modesty at the outset is, without the least doubt, the most favorable, as it is the most becoming disposition. That the absence of all rashness and presumption, — that a moderate and guarded spirit, which preferred the narrow limits of the positive and the certainly revealed to the unlimited negative side of speculation and of objection, — that a temper of this sort, modest without being, in any bad sense, confined and narrow, distinguished our brother Smith in an eminent degree, all who knew him at Andover can testify; and that he left the seminary firmly established, after thorough investigation, in all the essential doctrines which he taught and preached in after-life, may reasonably be presumed.

There were some particular points to which he then and afterwards devoted more especial attention. The *anthropological* side, if it may be so expressed, of theology — the questions relating to man as a moral agent, to the law which he is placed under, to his ability as an accountable being, to his dependence as a creature and a sinner, to the whole doctrine respecting virtue or holiness and respecting sin, and to the true source of moral strength for the redeemed — was the side which, by natural bent and inclination of mind, he was led to investigate the most profoundly; and in his mode of viewing and treating these and analogous topics, he ever showed remarkable vigor of thought and clearness of apprehension.

Whether it was at Andover, too, that Mr. Smith laid the foundation of his peculiar style of sermonizing, I do not know, but am inclined to believe that he never paid much attention, or attached great importance to any outward rules or teachings on this subject. He was a quick and ready writer, perhaps because he seldom undertook to put his pen to paper until he had thought through the subject before him. I believe he studied sermonizing by writing sermons, and that his sermons were written, for the most part, under the fervor and glow of some single thought which had taken full possession of his mind.

In June, 1819, he was licensed to preach by the Andover Association, and in the following September, having completed the three years' course of study in the theological institution, declining every offer to engage him at once in the active duties of his profession, he returned home to Hadley, with a view of enjoying a short season of repose and refreshment in his old home. His constitution, never robust, had suffered from long and continuous application to studious pursuits, and his friends were now anxious that he should, for the present, abandon all idea of assuming the labors and responsibilities of the ministry, and seek by change of occupation to restore his physical powers to their wonted vigor and elasticity. Just at this time, the office of Principal of Hopkins Academy, in Hadley, had been vacated by the resignation of the Rev. Dan Huntington. At the urgent request of the Trustees, Mr. Smith consented to take the oversight of this flourishing school for one year. Thus he began and closed his labors as a public man in the capacity of a teacher at the head of a literary institution; and in the first case, as in the last, he fulfilled the utmost reasonable expectations of his employers,



and secured to himself the love and respect of all with whom he had to do, either as associate teachers or as pupils.

The next recorded account which I find of Mr. Smith's movements, after he had completed the stipulated term of service in Hadley Academy, brings him into our state of Vermont. In a letter dated February 17, 1821, he received a unanimous call to settle as pastor over the First Congregational Church and Society in the east parish of Windsor, in this state. It appears that the first meeting of the society, convened for the purpose of giving this call, was held on December 5th, of the preceding year, — thus Mr. Smith's steps must have been directed to Vermont very soon, if not immediately after he offered himself as a candidate for the sacred office. The place to which he was invited was, on the whole, a very desirable one: a delightful village, good society, a central position for wide and influential activity; but he declined accepting this call, for what particular reasons I have not been informed. It was the church over which Mr. Wheeler, his friend and classmate at Andover, was soon afterwards settled.

We find him next, in the summer of 1822, at St. Albans, where he had come on a short visit to the friend who was soon to be his faithful helpmate to the end of his life. The Congregational church in this town being then destitute of a settled ministry, invited him to supply the pulpit for a Sabbath, — and then for several successive months. Soon after his return to Hadley, he received from this church and society a unanimous call to settle over them as their pastor. This, his second call from a church in Vermont, received a more favorable answer than had been given to the first; though, even in this case, he seems not to have made up his mind, until

after much deliberation and some misgivings, as to the probability of its being a field where he might labor successfully, and for any length of time. He acceded to the call, and was ordained June 4th, 1823, on which occasion his friend, Rev. Mr. Wheeler, of Windsor, preached the ordination sermon. About a month afterwards, July 1st, he was united in marriage to Miss Mary A. Little, eldest daughter of the late Dr. Ephraim Little, of St. Albans, and thus became settled and domiciliated on the spot which was thenceforth, and to the end of his life on earth, his fixed residence and the home of his affections.

Previous to his settlement at St. Albans, as it may here be remarked, he had preached, by invitation, in several parishes in Massachusetts and Connecticut, as well as in Windsor as above stated, and with acceptance and a desire to secure his services permanently;— a desire informally expressed indeed, but with the assurance that there was nothing to hinder an official call being extended to him, provided he would give encouragement that it would be favorably entertained.

It was a matter of surprise to many of his friends that he should at last decide to labor in northern Vermont, where the scattered churches were all, as it were, in the stage of infancy, comparatively feeble, and small in numbers, and in need of much patient training; and where the pecuniary support to be looked for by the minister was not only meagre at the best, but also insecure.<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts, Connecticut, and also the eastern borders of Vermont, presented fields of labor far more promising to any man inclined to regard the prospects of a comfortable living as the primary consideration. But

<sup>1</sup> The salary given at first to Mr. Smith was five hundred dollars; this was afterwards increased to seven hundred.

what might have operated upon other men as dissuatives, we have reason to think were the prevailing motives which decided the choice of this conscientious servant of the Lord. A prospect of hard labor where such labor was plainly needed, and the condition of the field, which promised important results of a permanent character to efforts wisely and faithfully bestowed, offered doubtless the most inviting prospect to him. And this view of the case is confirmed by his subsequent conduct. For although, during the course of his ministry here, he had many invitations coming from different quarters in and out of the state, and in which, by the usual inducements held out on such occasions, he was urged to exchange his present position for some other field of labor offering greater social and literary advantages, or a more certain prospect of extensive usefulness, he uniformly discouraged such attempts to disturb the relation between him and his people, as long as that relation continued to be a peaceful and harmonious one.

At the time Mr. Smith accepted the invitation from the people in St. Albans, and when he came there for the purpose of being ordained, the congregation had not as yet a church edifice of their own. They were accustomed to assemble for religious worship in the courthouse. But, as the place was thought to be too small for such an occasion as an ordination, the services by which Mr. Smith was inducted into the pastoral office were held in the Methodist chapel. Such was the incipient state of things in the religious community among whom he had chosen to cast his lot.

Thus his ministry began. Let us now trace its course, checkered with various experiences, pleasant and painful, through a period of twenty-seven years. Many of these experiences, being only such as he shared in com-

mon with every other faithful minister of the gospel, may be passed over slightly, or without any particular notice whatever. I shall endeavor to confine myself, for the most part, in this sketch, to the few incidents in Mr. Smith's pastoral career which served to bring out or to illustrate prominent traits of his character, or which for any other reason, subordinate to this main purpose, may seem to possess a claim to attention. Whether happy or not in my selection of facts, I shall aim to be as faithful in the statement of them as may be compatible with a careful avoidance of every unnecessary personal allusion. It should be remembered that the first and middle parts of Mr. Smith's ministry fell within a period when the state of the churches throughout the region where he labored was considerably different from what it is at the present time.

In the winter of 1825-26, — a little more than two years after his settlement, and probably as the result of his faithful labors, — an uncommon degree of attention to religion was awakened among the people of St. Albans and its vicinity. A disposition to serious inquiry, such as had not been witnessed before for a long time, manifested itself in the community generally, but especially among the young people, many of whom were hopefully converted. Whatever may have been the immediate occasion that led to this interesting state of things, whether it was to be ascribed to this or to that outward instrumentality, it bore evidence, to our pastor, of being a genuine work of the Holy Spirit, and he entered into it, as might be expected, with his whole heart. Without departing from the calm earnestness of his usual manner, and relying solely upon the truth as "the power of God unto salvation," he presented this truth with all the clearness and force which his own clear

apprehension of it and experience of its efficacy enabled him to do, before his awakened people, suiting his texts and his themes to the wants of the time, and with such effect — so I have been told by those who were present — as left an ineffaceable impression on all who heard him.

One person, now himself a preacher, who sat at this time under Mr. Smith's ministry, and who ascribes his own conversion, under God, to impressions then received, says that he still retains "in vivid recollection" several of the texts employed, and of the discourses preached from them, at this period. These texts were to him, and doubtless to many others, as goads and nails fixed by a master of assemblies. They moreover reflect the state of the preacher's own mind, his deep feeling of responsibility at so critical a season, his quick discernment of what was needed, and his ready tact in adapting himself to the real condition of things, and I therefore insert them here: "Prepare to meet thy God;" "One sinner destroyeth much good;" "Fools make a mock at sin;" "The Lord's portion is his people;" "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish! for behold, I work a work in your day which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

The history of the sermon from the text "One sinner destroyeth much good" — a sermon long remembered, preached on New Year's day — was, I have been informed, something like this: It had come to the knowledge of the pastor that a talented and influential young lawyer, who had recently established himself at St. Albans, opposed the good work going on in the parish — at least, spoke slightly of the prevailing interest in religious subjects. Fearing the injurious influence which one such individual might have on the young men of

the village, Mr. Smith came out in a sermon of great power, from the text above cited; and it had its effect, not only in silencing opposition, but in giving a new impulse to the religious movement among his people. About thirty, most of them young persons, were added to the church as the fruits of this revival.

These were the *first* fruits of his ministry, and thus far everything had gone on peacefully and prosperously. The church, which, at the time Mr. Smith came to St. Albans, was "weakened and prostrated by dissensions of a very acrimonious character, and of more than three years' standing, had come together as a unit upon him;"<sup>1</sup> and in this seeming union among themselves, and perfect understanding between pastor and flock, they were now experiencing, as indeed for some time longer they continued to experience, the salutary and blessed effects of a fellowship grounded, to all appearance, in a mutual confidence the most entire. But, in reality, and as it proved afterwards, the unanimity of feeling in the church was not resting upon the most solid foundation. Present policy seems to have had more influence in bringing the minds of all together than that mutual Christian love and forbearance which is the only basis of true union. It is not necessary to suppose that disaffected members of a church are bad men, or even that they are not Christians; but surely they are worse than useless members of the community to which they belong, and the sooner they and others know it the better for themselves and for all concerned. Suspicions and jealousies, in themselves mean and insignificant, may often be the only cause of misunderstanding; or it may have a more serious origin. But, no matter what the cause may be, the thing secretly cherished or fomented can never work

<sup>1</sup> Statement of one of the deacons.

anything but mischief, — coldness, estrangement, distrust, — altogether selfish feelings, whose tendency is to spread wider and wider, no man knows how or why, till the whole church becomes infected, and the minister's usefulness is thenceforth at an end.

Something like this had begun to be the state of things in the church at St. Albans, when, by a slight occasion from without, which led every man to assume at once his true position towards his fellow-members and towards the pastor, the whole extent of the evil was made apparent, and the proper course could be taken to bring it to an end. About the year 1830, Mr. Burchard, an evangelist, came by invitation into this part of Vermont. It is no business of mine to judge the motives of this individual, or his character as a Christian man. Whatever may have been his motives, his *measures* were by many thought extremely objectionable. He came professedly to stir up the churches here from their spiritual slumber, and awaken in them a deeper interest for the salvation of souls — an object most praiseworthy in itself, and which, rightly prosecuted, could have only met with the sanction of every settled pastor who had at heart the good of his people. But the difficulty was that this Mr. Burchard could do nothing except in his own way, and by "working in his own harness;" — except by taking the church, for the time being, out of the pastor's hands, and introducing among them a certain order of proceeding, to which Congregational churches in this region had never been accustomed, — a system by which the kingdom of God was not to be taken by force, but men were to be forced into it, as it were, in spite of themselves.

Mr. Smith took a decided stand from the first against the introduction of this evangelist into his own parish, or

into any part of the field, where his influence could prevent it. He had his objections both to the man and to his measures. But, aside from objections of this sort, he stood firmly upon a principle which he considered a fundamental one in Congregational church relations, viz., that the pastor, so long as he sustained that relation, could never properly surrender the flock committed to his special charge to the independent control of any other man. Said he to a brother in the ministry, on hearing that some person of property and influence in another church had publicly declared that "Mr. Smith of St. Albans and his opposition to this work must be put down," "I am doing what I regard as my *duty*. I am defending the best interests of the churches and the cause of God. And in this defence, if *need* be, I will resist unto blood." The passion of this language, in a man of such singular moderation on ordinary occasions, shows how high things must have been carried at this time on the other side.

The displeasure which seems to have been excited abroad against this faithful pastor for assuming to judge what was best for his own people and for the churches generally, found sympathy also in his own church and among his own society. Men slow to understand how "order is Heaven's first law"—and it is to be feared such uneasy spirits are to be found in almost every church—considered it a thing not to be tolerated that they must be prevented by one man's opposition from having among them the powerful preacher who had, without the least difficulty, found access to so many other churches. They seemed determined that, at any hazard, the door should be opened for him.

It is unnecessary to go further into the history of this sad affair; suffice it to say, that, by the firmness and



prudence of their minister, the church was finally steered clearly out of these difficulties, without suffering any other essential harm than that the elements of discontent were rather stifled for the present than wholly and forever removed out of the way.

A few years afterward measures were again put in train, by certain members of the church and some others, to introduce another evangelist of the same stamp into St. Albans. The Methodist chapel had been secured as the place for holding the meetings. All this was kept carefully concealed from our pastor. Finally, when the plan had been matured, and was about to be carried into execution, and when it was too late for any serious purpose of consultation, a member of the church calls upon his minister, to draw him out on the whole subject of such a movement. The minister, quite ignorant of what is in the wind, is very free and explicit in expressing his disapproval of it. All very well, had the whole thing ended here. But when these free remarks, made in unsuspecting confidence, are industriously circulated to the minister's disadvantage; when he is represented as being opposed to all measures for awakening careless sinners, — for directing the inquiring into the only sure and certain way of finding peace, — for bringing multitudes, by a short process, from the world into the church, — in a word, for promoting, in a manner the most speedy and effectual, the work of human salvation; when words spoken in a visit made under the garb of friendship are twisted into a shape for such unworthy purposes of misrepresentation, — it certainly requires a little more patience than human nature, even fortified by grace, ordinarily possesses, to maintain the same serenity of temper, and act under such circumstances the noble part most becoming a Christian minis-

ter. Yet our pastor so conducted himself in this trial, and others like it, as to secure, without forfeiting his own self-respect, the esteem of those who had thus inconsiderately injured him.

But from all this it would be wrong to conclude that Mr. Smith was opposed to any proper measures, though they might be something out of the ordinary line, by which the true interests of his people in spiritual things could be promoted. He was not only willing to spend and be spent himself in their service, but ready also to call in to his assistance, whenever necessary, his brethren in the ministry from abroad, at so-called "protracted meetings," when a diversity of gifts might be applied with peculiar advantage to awaken, or give a new impulse to an already awakened, religious interest in a particular community. Such meetings, from the time when Peter stood up with the eleven on the day of Pentecost, and when Paul and Barnabas went forth together for the work whereunto the Lord had called them, have been approved by good and pious men, and sanctioned by the divine blessing, in all ages of the church; and such meetings met the hearty approbation of our brother Smith, only that he would ever insist, with the apostle James, "My brethren, be not many masters."

But to return to the history of affairs in the St. Albans church: besides the misunderstanding which had arisen between some few members of the church and their pastor, which eventually led to the secession of these persons from the church and the formation of another church at St. Albans Bay (in the organization of which Mr. Smith himself was consulted), while the main body remained steadfastly, as they had ever done before, with the pastor, other difficulties arose. That negligence which, from some bad management or other, not unfre-

quently attends the collection and payment of the minister's salary — a delicate subject for him to complain of, though a grievous one for him to bear, but which, if not complained of by him who suffers it, is not apt to be thought of by those who occasion it, — this negligence had been suffered to exist so long and to such extent in the St. Albans society that Mr. Smith thought he had good reason for concluding the true reason for this backwardness in paying up his salary to be a want of interest in him and his preaching.

To put an end to all uncertainty with regard to this matter on his own part, and draw forth a decided expression of the sentiments and wishes of his congregation, Mr. Smith, at the close of the year 1834, addressed to them the following communication, which I here insert as a document that might supply a valuable hint to any minister who should ever happen to be placed in similar circumstances :

“ BRETHREN AND FRIENDS : — The present state of our affairs as a religious community imposes on me the duty, as I conceive, of taking some new course, and of communicating to you my decision relative to the same.

“ It is well known that, from one cause and another, the pecuniary affairs of this society have become considerably embarrassed, and that provision for what is deemed an adequate support of the gospel does not exist. The existing deficiency, I believe, no one supposes to arise from the *inability* of the society to supply it, but solely from the lack of a necessary interest in the subject. In this state of things I suggested to individuals, and subsequently to the church in a public meeting, that I conceived the difficulty arose from the loss of interest in the present minister, and that his retiring would restore life and energy to the body.

“ But in reply it was represented that the views of the church and society did not accord with mine on this point, and moreover, that a removal of the pastor, under existing circumstances, would be followed by most disastrous consequences to this people.

“ At this time an effort was set on foot to raise the stipulated salary by a new subscription ; but this was at length abandoned as impracticable. Another project was then devised to secure the end, viz., by leasing the seats in this house, and appropriating the rents to this object. But, to my mind, the success of this plan is all but hopeless.

“ Not only is the condition in which the minister is placed by these fruitless efforts for his support very embarrassing and perplexing, but it is conceived that the interests of the society are also very much endangered. Saying nothing of the unpleasant posture in which the minister is placed, it is certain that a continual agitation of the subject of ministerial support, under existing circumstances, threatens to defeat the great object for which the Christian ministry is valuable to any people.

“ It is plain, then, to me, that one of two courses should be taken on my part, and taken now. The first is, to resign the pastoral office which I sustain to this church. But to this it is objected, that the interests of the church would be sacrificed by such a step at this time ; it being represented that the people with one voice desire the relation to be continued, and that a separation from the pastor will open a door to unavoidable divisions in the church.

“ The other course is, that I continue my labors as a minister without any remuneration for my services. I have concluded to take the *latter* course ; and accord-

ingly do hereby discharge all subscriptions that exist for my support subsequent to the 8th of December, 1834, and shall claim no compensation for services after that date.

“In connection I would remark that I expect that the balance due on my last year’s salary will be made out to me, and I hope it may be done promptly. This I conceive to be an act of justice to me, inasmuch as it has not only been stipulated, but it has also been the ground of my reliance in the advances I have made the year past for the support of my family.<sup>1</sup> . . .

“ST. ALBANS, Dec. 12, 1834.”

This document might fail of being rightly understood by those not fully acquainted with the straightforward character of the writer. It might be supposed that something more was meant than said; that he could hardly be serious in proposing to serve the people of his charge without any remuneration whatever; in a word, that it was but an expedient hit upon to stimulate them to greater promptness in collecting and paying over his salary. But it is safe to say that no such thing was in-

<sup>1</sup> The balance of salary remaining unpaid at the date of this paper amounted to a considerable sum. The family was a large one, even at this time; and, as I suppose, dependent in great measure, if not wholly, on Mr. Smith’s small income. The house in which they lived belonged to Mrs. Little, his wife’s mother. Attached to this were a few acres of land. Mr. Smith, also, at a later period, received a small patrimony from his father, the whole of which was expended in the support of his family. These, so far as I can learn, were all the means he had, besides his salary, of providing food and clothing for a numerous household, educating his children, and exercising a hospitality which was duly honored because it was always so cheerfully bestowed. It was no uncommon thing for fifteen or twenty persons to be gathered at his board for days, and I know not but weeks, together. Of course, nothing short of the most wonderful economical talent could have successfully conducted the affairs of such a household for so many years.

tended. The supposition would be inconsistent with the statements made in the communication itself ; inconsistent with that character for manly dignity which the writer of it never forfeited by a single act of his life ; and inconsistent with the views he always held and maintained on the subject of ministerial support, which according to him should be wholly voluntary. He meant as he said, and meant to abide strictly by what he said. It was his purpose undoubtedly, and his mind was fully made up, to separate from his people as soon as he could do so without damaging their interests ; and on the simple principle that where a minister is really wanted, he will be promptly and cheerfully supported. He makes no complaint, but presents a plain statement of the facts, and his interpretation of them. If he had interpreted them wrongly, he gave those who better knew the real state of the case a fair opportunity to correct his mistake by discharging all existing subscriptions for his support, while at the same time, to remove all apprehension of danger to their interests, he agrees to serve them for nothing until they could find a suitable person to take his place. Thus he acted on principle, and with decision, and yet not without a respectful and generous regard to the opinions and feelings of his congregation.

What particular action was now taken by the church and society I have not thought it important to inquire. Whatever it was, it must have been satisfactory to the pastor, since the separation which he contemplated did not then take place.

In 1836, Mr. Smith, for the first time, made formal application to the church for their concurrence in calling a council to dissolve the pastoral relation between him and the church. Several reasons weighed with him ; the chief, "causes existing within the church." What

these causes were, aside from the general state of things already described, I have taken no special pains to inform myself, as the prompt and decided action of the church, together with their *unanimous* request that he would withdraw his communication, resulted in his complying with their wishes. But I am of the opinion that another consideration besides the state of things in the church had no small weight in Mr. Smith's mind at this time;—that he already began to have misgivings as to the possibility of meeting, with his present means, the expenses of a large and increasing family. For, in the paper signifying his compliance with the request of the church and society that he would consent still to remain with them, he says: "It may be proper to connect with this the remark, that the change in the expenses of living, and the duty I owe to a family *inadequately* provided for, may ere long require a change in the field of my labor, or in the *mode* in which I may serve the church and the world." What change in the mode of serving the church and world, which would not necessarily involve a change in the field of labor, was here contemplated, I do not certainly know. It would not be unnatural to suppose from the character and bent of his mind, from his known ability as a debater, and from the interest which he ever took and manifested in questions relating to the public welfare, that he may have now entertained some thought of entering the field of political life. But though he might undoubtedly have filled any post within the gift of his fellow-citizens with honor to himself and great benefit to the state, it is not probable that he ever thought seriously of quitting ministerial labors to engage in the business of a politician.<sup>1</sup> It seems most likely

<sup>1</sup> He was at one time urgently solicited to stand as a candidate for the office of representative to Congress from his district.

that the change in his mode of "serving the church and the world," which he was led to regard at this time as a not improbable contingency, was the business of a teacher or presiding officer in some theological or literary institution ; for he had already been consulted repeatedly as to his willingness, if he should be asked, to make some such "change" as this.

But a very urgent application of another sort, and an appeal to his deepest sympathies as a minister of Christ, soon led him to forget everything but the particular work to which he had consecrated himself. Fourteen years, or a little more than half the period of his ministry at St. Albans, had now gone by. He had in this time, it may be truly said, made full proof of the ministry, of its trials and of his power of endurance, of its requirements and of his qualifications to fulfil them. His character for faithfulness, prudence, and ability in discharging every duty belonging to the sacred calling, was established. He was widely known. The church, which is ever on the look-out for men of this description, — men who have been tried on all sides and not found wanting, — had its eye upon him. He received many letters — several from vacant parishes in his native state — asking his consent to stand as a candidate for settlement over long-established and flourishing churches, offering every outward inducement which could tempt a man who could be moved by such considerations alone to change his situation. Several of these letters are now before me, dated previous to the year 1837. He seems, for some reason or other, to have paid little attention to them ; at least, I never heard it intimated by him or anybody else that he had received such applications, till the letters were put into my hands.

But among these came one, which I did know some-



thing about, from a church and society that had recently been gathered at Beverly, Mass. As this was the only case in which, during a pastorate of twenty-seven years, he thought proper to take a request of this sort into serious consideration, and where it would have been consonant with his own wishes to transfer his relations, had the way been clear for so doing; as it was a case, moreover, which, in the course of its history, drew from Mr. Smith a more distinct expression of his views regarding himself and his relations to the St. Albans church than he at any time, before or afterwards, was induced to communicate; as it thus, as well as by its other effects and results, brought the man more completely out to view, perhaps, than any other incident of his life, I have felt bound to set forth the circumstances of this case, and the motives of Mr. Smith's action in it from first to last, more fully than the affair would otherwise, and in itself considered, have required or justified.

The society at Beverly had just erected a new church edifice, and having heard of Mr. Smith through a friend, the Rev. Mr. Williams, of Salem, and other quarters, as a man who would be likely to suit them, they sent for him to preach the sermon at the dedication of their house of worship. Mr. Smith went, and this short visit resulted in a unanimous and urgent request that he would come and take upon himself the charge of this infant church and society. In their first letter, communicating this request to Mr. Smith, the church say: "Through your kind compliance with our wishes, we have had opportunity to test for ourselves the correctness of the representations previously made to us of your adaptedness, in all essential particulars, to our somewhat peculiar circumstances and wants; and

you may be assured, dear sir, that we exaggerate nothing when we say that the expectations thus excited have been *more* than realized. In a word, as we look back upon our proceedings in this important matter, and contemplate the present aspect of our affairs, we cannot refrain from saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;' nor can we doubt that He to whom, as we trust, we have committed ourselves, and whose guidance, direction, and blessing we have sought at every step of our progress, looks with approbation upon the effort now made by us to persuade you to take the oversight of this flock. To Him we would look with humble confidence to incline your heart to comply with our united and earnest request, and direct your way unto us, and at the same time to prepare the people of your present charge, who have enjoyed the privilege of attending on your ministrations, to relinquish their claims to the *continued* enjoyment of this privilege in favor of an infant church and congregation urgently in need of the advantages to be derived from your *experience* in the ministry."

In reply to this earnest call from the Washington Street Church in Beverly, which Mr. Smith, in view of the circumstances under which it was presented, neither thought it right to reject without careful deliberation, nor courteous to entertain without reasonably submitting the same to his church, he consented to take the subject into consideration, and finally to refer to a council the question of his removal, provided his own church concurred in the measure.

The council met in April, 1837; and the communication submitted by the pastor to his church, requesting a dismissal from the pastoral relation, having been read, Mr. Smith, in presenting his own view of the case,

addressed the council as follows: "In making this request, I think I can say that I have acted from no feelings of discontent with my present situation, much less from the least alienation of heart from the people or the community generally among whom my lot has been cast, and whom, according to the small measure of my ability, I have endeavored now for fourteen years to serve in the work of the ministry. Unworthy as I have ever been of the trust committed to me 'by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,' and imperfectly, both in spirit and measure, as I have served the cause of truth and righteousness in this church and the associated churches, I still trust that, with some sincerity, I can say, 'I have preferred this Jerusalem above my chief joy;' and that in a very humble sense I can adopt the language of the great apostle, 'I have not sought *yours*, but *you*.' It is true, indeed, of myself and of those who have been for a long time associated with me in the ministry of the churches in this region, that seasons of darkness and painful anxiety have gone over us. We have seen the churches deeply agitated, Christian confidence to an alarming extent suspended, ourselves subjected to a distressing suspicion, and our arduous labors and anxieties resulting in little or no perceptible good. In these circumstances we have all, doubtless, felt like *men*, and, for *one*, I can say, furnished too much evidence that we were men 'sanctified but in part.' Still, wherever the clouds began to break away, and light gilded the perfection of our Zion, our hearts have welcomed the *omen*, and with freshened hopes and cheerfulness we have addressed ourselves to our Master's work. And I would add, that if the will of Christ were clearly indicated that I should remain here until I had finished my course and the ministry I have received, with the

prospect of enjoying the confidence of this church, of aiding in promoting 'the order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ,' and of being the unworthy instrument of turning this people and their children' to the Lord—nothing, unless I am deceived, would afford me higher joy. Of a truth, it is in my heart to live and die with them. But the indications of the Lord's will, and these prospects of future usefulness, are far from being *clear* to my mind, though they have been the subject of much anxious inquiry. Some of the causes which, in my judgment, have exerted an adverse influence on my labors, and which, to a considerable extent, continue to operate,<sup>1</sup> have been the subject of much—perhaps *too* much—free remark in this place, and need not be distinctly adverted to. Indeed, on this point, I think altercation, or even discussion, at this time, would be unprofitable; and hence I would be understood to allude to nothing save what will be cheerfully *conceded* by all. Differences, all admit, exist;—these differences impair the confidence of a certain portion of the church in the labors of their pastor, and hence prevent that cordial and confiding coöperation which is essential to the usefulness either of the church or of the minister. So much, it is thought, may be said without incurring the charge of casting unworthy reflections upon any one. Let it be conceded that all alike are the friends of the work of the Holy Spirit, that all desire the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and the salvation of men—not that one desires it to advance more rapidly, or is ready to make greater *sacrifices* for it than another; still, there must be a *like-mindedness*, a union of counsel, union of effort, a mutual confidence, or the

<sup>1</sup> He instances internal disunion and *foreign* influence.

laborers must be *separated*. Place them *together*, and one will *undo* the work of the other, and the desires of all be frustrated."

Proceeding then to speak of the church in Beverly, he says: "In casting about for a minister, they have assumed — what is pretty generally conceded at the present day — that ministers are the property of *the church*, and that their field of labor is to be determined on grounds of *public utility*. A local church may call to the pastoral office, among them, whom they please; and if the person called is already a pastor, and he, and the church over which he is placed, see fit to refer the matter to a council, it is competent to that council to release the pastor from his charge, that he may be at liberty to accept the call that has been proffered him; and, if sufficient reasons exist for this measure, they will doubtless feel it to be their *duty* to adopt it.

"The people of Beverly have seen fit to select myself for their minister, as suited to their taste, and, in their judgment, to the condition in which they are placed. They consider that a man of *experience* only would secure their purposes; and whether they have judged well or ill in the choice they have been pleased to make, can be determined only by the events which Divine Providence may order.

"They have extended this call to me under the expectation that this people would *consent* to my *removal*. They have been apprised that disunion existed in this church to such an extent that I had been induced on a former occasion to ask for a dismission; and they naturally inferred that if a people would *permit* such a request to be made, — based, as it was, upon events that had for a long time been transpiring before their eyes, — they would not be reluctant to have the request

*granted.* They considered that the people had been suffering their minister, either through design or negligence on their part, to be cast before the *public*; and hence, that those who set a value upon his services, and sought to secure them, ought not to be disappointed."

After describing more particularly the situation and circumstances of the church that had given him the call, he goes on to say: "In deciding on the relative importance of the two fields of ministerial labor, and the claims which they who occupy them respectively have on the services of a particular minister, a council would naturally direct their attention to several points.

"1. They would consider the *societies themselves* — their comparative importance as to the number of souls that composed them. . . .

"2. The council would consider the *adaptation* of the minister, as to his *talents* and *habits*, to the character and wants of the respective societies. And when *experience* has been had, the *result* of the experiment made, it would seem, must go far in determining this question. Is the minister *useful* where he is? Has he the confidence of the church and society? Are the church united under his labors? Is it in a growing and prosperous state? Is there a reasonable prospect that, under circumstances more auspicious than those in which he is now placed, his usefulness would be enlarged in all these respects?

"3. The council would be called to consider the *relations* of these respective churches to the community around them. It will be admitted that a church *small* in itself, may be important from its *connection* with other churches. It may be a centre of ecclesiastical influence on a section more or less extensive, and this circumstance deservedly adds to its importance. In *this* respect, I

admit that the church in *this* place, were it true to the position Providence has assigned it, has an advantage over the one in Beverly. While this place is the seat of the courts, and holds its present priority in point of business, this church might, and it would, did God's cause excite in it *half* the interest that *trade* and *money-making* do, shed forth an influence that would reach every hamlet in the county. But it is not to be forgotten that what puts force in the hands of a *united* and *single-minded* church, gives it also, when disunited, and withal indifferent, except to *measures* and *parties*, a sad pre-eminence in the work of mischief.

"4. The council, also, would naturally consider the state of the surrounding churches, and the means of instruction enjoyed by the *community* at large in determining a question of the kind proposed. . . .

"5. Finally, they would consider the advantages, on the one hand, resulting from a thorough knowledge of the people, of the peculiar state and wants of the religious community, and of an established character and influence, which long residence in a place gives to an observing and discreet minister; and, on the other hand, from the *impetus* given to his own mind and labor by change of place, from the fruits of his former *studies*, and from the novelty and freshness that attend his ministrations to a new people. It is a common remark at the present day, and on this account deserves serious consideration, 'that settled ministers, in the course of a few years, *use themselves up*—exhaust their resources, and lose their *power* to influence a people whom they can no longer delight with the novelty of their manner, or startle with the eccentricity of their measures.' The council must decide how much weight is to be given to this doctrine; still, it cannot be denied, that many minis-

ters whose usefulness has become *questionable*, in churches where they have long labored, have, by a removal, become eminently serviceable to the kingdom of Christ; and furthermore, it is not to be concealed that this doctrine has attained to such prevalence in ecclesiastical councils, that they have suffered it, probably in a great majority of cases, to *determine* questions that have been submitted to them for decision.

“It may, perhaps, be expected that I say a word in regard to the present state of the church, and the effect which my removal, should it take place, will probably have upon them. This church\* has participated in the unhappy excitement that has pervaded our religious community for the last two years; although the great body of the church have been united among themselves and with their pastor in their views of the question that has principally occasioned the agitation. A portion of the members, however, were understood to take the opposite side, and to be dissatisfied that the church did not adopt the improvements supposed to be made in the means of evangelizing the world. Discussion ensued, and from discussion parties and party feelings arose. The state of things was such, six months ago, that I was induced, from a conviction that I could not profitably serve a church whose opinions and feelings I could not influence, to ask for a *dismissal*. This step brought about a free and friendly conversation between myself and those who were supposed to be disaffected. As the result of this interview, a general and decided wish was expressed by these brethren that I should remain the pastor of the church. That some of these persons have since that time respected and confided in me as their pastor, and have sincerely sought the unity of the church, I fully believe.



“ That the church will preserve its unity, and go on happily and prosperously under a *new* pastor, will depend on the assurance the church may receive that she is not in *future*, as she has been in times past, to be agitated and distracted in regard to measures which are known to be decidedly repugnant to the sentiments of a great proportion of the church. If the minority can be content with anything short of agitating the exciting questions, I know not what hinders the peace and prosperity of this beloved Zion. That they *will* exercise this forbearance under a *new pastor*, though of the same sentiments, substantially, with those *I* entertain, may be, perhaps, reasonably expected. Whatever of party feeling or personal disaffection may exist, I should hope would be confined to *myself*, and not transferred to my successor.”

From these remarks, in which the merits of the question on both sides are so fairly presented — though with a slight tinge of *personal* feeling — as to resemble more the charge to a jury than the argument of an advocate pleading his own cause, it would be difficult to say to which side the wishes of the speaker himself, on the whole, inclined. It is but too plain that the council were determined in their decision much more by the known wishes of the majority of the St. Albans church, by the general sentiment of the community in all that region, and by their own reluctance to part with the most influential minister in their connection, than by a patient and careful examination of all the points so distinctly and fairly laid before them by the interested party. Mr. Smith's own judgment, which, as he supposed, was really determined by a careful consideration of all the aspects of the question as he presented it before the council, unquestionably differed from that of

the council, who decided that he should remain where he was.<sup>1</sup> It was, indeed, mainly with him a question

<sup>1</sup> Copy of the result of council. "After a review of the whole subject, in all its extended bearings, it appeared that a large majority of the Church, and the whole Society, earnestly desire the continuance of Mr. Smith as their pastor, and still repose an unabated confidence in his character and abilities as their spiritual guide. It appears, also, that there is in this community a general sympathy in the desire for his continuance, — that there is no deficiency in regard to his support, that there is no professed disagreement between him and any portion of his flock in regard to doctrine. It appears from the representations made to the council, that no difficulty exists in the church which ought to be regarded as an obstacle to his continuance, and which may not be removed by the exercise of a Christian spirit.

"In view of all these considerations which have been brought before them by the parties calling them together, they cannot find reasons to justify them in being accessory to the removal of Brother Smith from his present charge.

"While they would cordially sympathize with the desires of those brethren who have so urgently invited him to another sphere of labor, yet such are their views of the importance of the station which he now occupies in relation to the interests of truth and all the best interests of society in this place, and in an extended region of country, that they cannot give precedence to another, but upon very clear and decisive grounds. Such are their convictions of his past usefulness in sustaining these interests, and of the great importance of the influence which he has acquired and now exerts for their promotion — so great, in their view, is the need of a continuance of his labors here in the cause of Christ, that they cannot, consistently with their sense of duty to the church, be instrumental in dissolving the bonds which unite him with this people and with themselves in the labors of the gospel.

"Therefore, Resolved, unanimously, That in the view of this council it is inexpedient to dissolve the pastoral relation subsisting between the Rev. Worthington Smith and this church and people.

"Resolved, moreover, That while the council have the convictions above expressed, they can but regard with pain every obstacle thrown in the way of his usefulness, and earnestly conjure all the members of this church to coöperate with and sustain their pastor; that taking into view the sentiments expressed, as those of all the members of this church, in respect to the character, doctrines, and labors of Mr. Smith, they consider all remarks and efforts tending to diminish the effect of his ministrations and to depreciate his public character, as strikingly inconsistent with the sentiments thus expressed, and in no way to be justified.

"The council consider that the present state of affairs in this beloved

as to the comparative prospects, so far as human foresight could conjecture, of a useful and happy ministry among a people wholly united in his favor and ready to make any reasonable sacrifice to obtain him, and among a people not so perfectly united, who valued him on the whole, but not in the same sense, and with the same intensity and unanimity of feeling.

Let us now look at the effects which this decision of the council had upon the several interested parties. The St. Albans church were, of course, well satisfied with it. Moreover, in communicating their acquiescence in the result of the council, they took occasion to say, "That having been gratified in their wishes by the determination of the council, the church are laid under increasing obligation to sustain the pastor in his ministerial labors; that they owe it to him, to themselves, and to the great Head of the Church, most heartily and sincerely to co-operate with the pastor in his endeavors to promote the cause of pure religion in this place; and that it is the solemn duty of every individual member to arouse from his stupidity, lay aside all selfishness and worldliness, and prepare the way for good to come to the people."

But the church which had given him the call received the announcement of the decision in a spirit which touchingly manifested his deep hold on their affections, the keenness of their disappointment at this unexpected

church is one which calls for much prayer and prudence in all its members; they feel that the strength, enlargement, and glory of the church, if not its very existence, will, under God, very much depend on its union.

"Such is the result which the council feel constrained to submit to this church, praying that the Head of the Church would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may know the love of Christ, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

JAMES MARSH, Moderator."

rejection of their suit, and a resolute determination to leave nothing untried to bring about a reconsideration of the case. In a well-written document, directed to Mr. Smith, too long to be inserted here, they speak first of the effect of his reply, and of the communication from the council, upon the party to whom they were addressed,—an effect which it would be in vain for them to attempt adequately to express. “Seeing our fond hopes ‘blasted,’” they said, “our sanguine expectations cut off, we were ready to conclude that the God in whom we had trusted, whose guidance we verily believed we had sought and followed, and whose presence we thought had hitherto been with us, had now utterly forsaken us, and that there was no longer any hope that our earnest desires for your pastoral services among us would be realized. But the midnight darkness thus gathered around us was soon, in a measure, alleviated by the reflection that this might be, as you suggested, though in a different sense, but a *trial of our faith*, and not designed as a rebuke of our presumption, in attempting to compass our ends by means not approved of God. Least of all, could we doubt for a moment that the *real object* of a righteous Providence, in these apparently untoward and afflictive manifestations, was a *subject of inquiry*, in our circumstances at once important and appropriate.” The church go on to say, that, in accordance with this view of the existing posture of their affairs, a number of special meetings had been held, in which members of the church and of the society participated, with a view to obtain, by free discussion, an expression of the views and feelings of the whole community; and which had resulted in a unanimous determination of the church and society, to “*renew* their call to the Rev. Mr. Smith, in manner and form as already presented to him.’ The resolutions communicating this decision were fol-

lowed by a number of explanatory statements and arguments vindicating this action, and pointing out the serious consequences to themselves, in various ways, which must ensue if this their second application should be rejected.

It remains to consider the course taken by Mr. Smith in the delicate situation in which he now found himself placed. He had, of course, in the letter announcing the result of the council to the Washington-street Church, signified his own acquiescence in that result, though propriety forbade his even hinting how far his own individual judgment differed from that of the body who had been chosen to advise him. But when, notwithstanding this, the disappointed church renewed their call, holding up, as they did, among their other reasons for so doing, that if they had possessed, at the first, all the information which the council had now communicated to them, they should probably have been discouraged from making any attempt to secure Mr. Smith's settlement among them. What now had he to say or do? It was, indeed, a case presenting some difficulty, which, to be properly and satisfactorily managed and disposed of, required no little prudence and delicacy of feeling, as well as firmness, on the part of the chief sufferer, amidst these conflicting claims and interests.

The following final letter of Mr. Smith to the church in Beverly shows how deeply he felt for the people he had unintentionally disappointed, how carefully he had reconsidered their claims, and how judiciously he knew how to present the reasons which forbade him to move any further on the subject:

*"To the Committees of the Washington-street Church and Society.*

"GENTLEMEN: The communication of the 15th ult., which you did me the honor to transmit, was duly re-

ceived, and though detained much longer than I intended it should be, it has been almost daily the subject of that serious and painful interest to my mind which its importance, viewed in all its bearings, is calculated to awaken. The sentiments of unabated regard which breathe in every line of that communication, while I am sensible how poorly I deserve them, serve only to enhance my sense of obligation to the people who have thus reiterated their tokens of friendship, and to deepen the regret I feel in being under the necessity of *renewing* the disappointment which I have once before unwillingly occasioned them.

- " Truth, I think, will justify me in saying that I have endeavored so to present to my mind the claims of the church and society whom you represent, as, if possible, to see my way clear to comply with their wishes. Were I released from my present charge, and removed from this section of the country, it would not be difficult to see my duty in the direction of Beverly; but, as things *now* are, the decision, it would seem, must be different.

" *In the first place* : the decision of the council is in my way. Admitting that they are liable to err, still, considering that they acted in view of all the light that could be obtained, formed their result deliberately, under a sense of their responsibility, and after solemn prayer for Divine guidance, much weight must deservedly be attached to their opinion. It would hardly be safe for one's reputation as a man of prudence and order to disregard their opinion, unless new and important light in the case should be discovered, and such as it might be presumed would have materially influenced their result. The people *here* cannot be made to acknowledge that such additional light is to be found in your second com-

munication; and hence they decline submitting the matter for further advice. Those of the *council* whom I have consulted in the case, concur in the same opinion. It is evident that no council that could be convened here would consent to dismiss me, except on the ground that I was *determined* to go, at all hazards.

“ Again : the present state and prospects of *this church and people* are in the way of my leaving. When I consented to take your proposal into consideration, I verily thought my removal from this field would not be regarded in the light of a calamity. Members of this church had participated in the agitations which for the last two years have grievously shaken the religious community of Vermont. In opposing the popular spirit and measures of the times, I had so far lost their confidence, that I thought it would be judged best, on prudential grounds, that I should retire. But when the matter was called up, as it was before the council, it assumed an aspect altogether unexpected. *Nine-tenths* of the congregation insisted on my staying; and had I been dismissed, the society would have been dismembered. Our condition, it is true, is *now* somewhat changed ; still, the most judicious here anticipate sad consequences if I should leave them, even now. They sympathize with you in your condition ; but still feel that if you could understand *their* case you would not condemn this resistance to your wishes.

“ Another circumstance is urged against my removal at this time, which is, that within the last few months, about *one-sixth* of the stated ministry in Vermont has been broken up. They have mostly retired beyond the limits of the state ; others must follow them, and few, if any, come in to supply their place. Such are the disastrous results of our late experiments. The conclu-

sion urged from this fact is, that those who *can* stay *ought* to stay, at least till the times change for the better.

“I might add other considerations, which have had greater or less weight on my mind; but it is not material to enumerate them. Enough, I trust, has been said to convince you of my integrity, though I am constrained, as before, to decline the invitation which you have so generously, and with such flattering unanimity, presented to me the second time. I feel a confidence, not in the least abated, that your cause will *prosper*. I believe *God* is with you, and this thought, more than anything else, has made me feel that it would be safe and pleasant to cast in my lot with you. This God will cause his face to shine upon you, and will keep you, and ere long will set before you the man himself has chosen. To his faithful care and the good word of his grace I would again most affectionately commend the interests of your church and society.”

Thus the correspondence on this matter, and its history, terminated; and no one, I am confident, will, on reflection, think that it occupies a disproportionate space, or that the documents relating to it should have been omitted or abbreviated. Those from Mr. Smith himself are, in a certain sense and so far as they go, *autobiographical*. The first paper, especially,—I mean the address to the council,—was one in which he could not avoid speaking of himself, and of giving a part of the history of his mind during two of the most trying and eventful years of his ministry. The case was one well calculated to bring out all that was either noble or faulty in his nature. It moreover elicited from him a very clear and explicit statement, before his brethren of the clergy, of what he thought every minister was entitled



to expect from all the members of his church, as the condition of any reasonable hope of benefiting either them or the congregation generally by his public ministrations. The resolution of the church, at the end of these proceedings, which has been quoted above, shows that they felt and appreciated the justness of these remarks of their pastor, made on so solemn an occasion. This event brought about, in fact, a better understanding of views and feelings on both sides; and harmony being thus restored on a solid foundation, and new confidence and courage inspired, the future course of Mr. Smith's ministerial labors, to their termination among that people, was marked by a kindliness of feeling, on the part of both pastor and flock, which continually cemented the bond of union between them.

Mr. Smith, as it may here be remarked, was never inclined to hold the tie which binds a minister to the particular flock over which he has once been placed as pastor in so slight estimation as some affect to regard it. On the contrary, he cherished and constantly defended the principle, that the relation thus formed "is so sacred, and attended with such solemn responsibilities on both sides, as to render any attempt to disturb or dissolve it unnecessarily, eminently hazardous, both to the ministry and to the churches." If his remarks on this point before the council are carefully examined, it will be seen that they are entirely consistent with what is here asserted. Nor, if the circumstances are duly weighed, will his own application for a dismissal prove that his practice was in contradiction to his principles. He asked to be dismissed on what he himself judged to be good and sufficient grounds, but with entire submission of his own judgment to that of an impartial council. And he settled down upon their decision; for although,

during the ensuing years of his ministry, he was still repeatedly solicited to leave his people, and enter other fields sufficiently inviting to any man who was of a really uneasy spirit, he did not hesitate a moment to discourage all such applications by a peremptory refusal.

Yet he was ever ready to assume such official relations as were tendered to him, at home or from abroad, of which the duties, however onerous, were deemed by him compatible with the full discharge of those which he owed to his own people. As early as 1825 he was appointed a member of the Board of Trustees of Middlebury College. In the same year he was appointed a member of the corporation of the University of Vermont, and accepted. He was for many years President of the Board of Trustees of the Franklin County Grammar School, in which capacity he did much to promote the interests of education in his community. In 1846 he was appointed County Superintendent of Common Schools, and during the winter of that year visited all the schools in the county, examining into their condition, of which he drew up a carefully prepared statistical account.

His connection with the University of Vermont, as a member of the corporation, fell in a period of its history which, beyond all others it has ever passed through, called for wisdom, energy, and decision on the part of the body to whom the general management of its concerns is entrusted. It is impossible to say how much the institution is indebted to Mr. Smith for the deep interest he then took in its welfare — his clear discernment and steady advocacy of those measures which were best suited to promote it. At the extraordinary meetings of the Board, in critical times, his presence

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was never missing. Perhaps there was no individual member of the corporation whose opinion had more weight with the whole body. He took large views of education, as a vital interest of the state, to be raised up, and kept at its proper level in a community, only by cherishing its higher institutions. Of the propriety and practicability of sustaining the oldest collegiate foundation in Vermont, he never had any doubts. He was therefore a bold and hopeful as well as prudent and cautious adviser. It is no more than just and right to say of all the other officers of the Board at the time referred to, — several of whom have, with the subject of this memoir, already gone from their earthly labors, — that during the worst times in the history of this college they ever kept up good heart and hope. But it cannot be denied that Mr. Smith was the one who presented such grounds for encouragement to a system of vigorous and enterprising action, as infused new life into the body. In regard to measures for increasing the usefulness of the institution, he was inclined to favor such as were on the largest and most liberal scale. In regard to questions of discipline, whenever they came before the Board, — as they sometimes did, — he was an advocate for the greatest moderation consistent with the preservation of good order. In regard to college officers, he was for placing the best men that could be found in the several departments of instruction, and paying them liberally; and to maintain the cause of religion and a right religious spirit in the institution, he was for having one officer who, in connection with other and lighter duties, might regularly preach to the students in the college chapel.

When the seat of President of this institution was vacated by the resignation of Dr. Wheeler, in 1849, it

was not necessary to look far in quest of a suitable man to fill his place. Mr. Smith, who had already, in 1845, received from the corporation the degree of D. D., in testimony of their high appreciation of him as a man and a scholar, was appointed to the vacant office. At first he declined. Afterwards, when it came to be represented to him that unanimity in the choice of a presiding officer could not easily be secured in the case of any other nomination, he consented to reconsider the matter; and finally, to the general regret of the church and community with whom he had so long been connected, and who were now, as before, exceedingly unwilling to part with him, he accepted the appointment. The failure of his organs of speech, now worn and enfeebled by long and constant public speaking, was an argument, both to himself and his friends, in favor of his trying the experiment of a change of labor, in a vocation where there would be less occasion for a constant strain upon the voice.

As by accepting this appointment Dr. Smith withdrew from the regular calling of a parish minister, I have thought it would be proper, before passing to the history of his short but eminently useful life at the head of a college, to take a brief survey of his character and merits as a preacher of the gospel, as a pastor among his own people, and as a minister whose counsel and advice were universally sought, in all this region, and occasionally from farther abroad, in matters pertaining to the prosperity of the church and the general interests of religion. The estimation of his character in other respects and relations may be more appropriately considered in the review of his whole life, which shall form the conclusion of this memoir.

The period now to be considered constituted nearly

one-half, taken out of the best part of his life — that in which his powers of body and of mind were in their highest state of vigor. His health, never perfectly good, was now in a comparatively sound condition, and he took great pains to keep it so by constant labor out of doors. In later life, he was accustomed to remark, that he was more robust at *forty* than at *twenty* years of age, and that he had *made* what constitution he had, by daily exercise in the open air. Still, however, he was subject, even during this period, to frequent and sometimes severe attacks of indisposition ; and in his large family of children, cases of illness were almost constantly occurring. At such times of sickness in the family, he was always on hand, and unsparing in his services. His habit of receiving and entertaining a great deal of company also subjected him to many interruptions, and sometimes, no doubt, to a loss of time which he could ill afford to spare. But an *untiring industry* enabled him, in good measure, to make up for the time thus lost. As it was said of George Stephenson, the railroad engineer, that the secret of his success in life was his readiness in turning every spare minute to profit, so it might be said of the St. Albans minister, that he accomplished whatever he was enabled to do in his greater work, by making the most of the smallest fragments of his time. And it is wonderful to think how much he brought about. Besides doing a great deal of hard work out of doors,—partly for the love of it, partly for the sake of his health, and partly, perhaps, from those motives to economy which his large family would naturally inspire,—he was in the regular habit of writing two sermons a week, each carefully thought out and written to the last word. Outside of the time thus employed,—to which must be added the many hours and sometimes

days spent in parochial visitations, or in attending councils and meetings of other bodies,—he contrived to find sufficient leisure for a great amount of reading and study, by which he kept fairly up with the progress of the times in all the learning and literature in which he was more specially interested. He was one of those few who understand how to *make* time, by order and method, by always having something on hand to do, and a set time in which to do it. Every hour had its allotted occupation. Yet he was not so strictly formal in the observance of these arrangements that he could not bear to have them interrupted. Many a time have his parishioners or persons from abroad called upon him at the close of the week, when he was deeply engaged on his sermons, and after having spent hours in conversation with him, retired, without even suspecting that he had suffered any inconvenience from the interruption,—so truly polite was he, so ever ready to think less of his own convenience than of any service or pleasure he could render to others.<sup>1</sup>

This economizing of time, this habit—with him a second nature—of doing everything in the season for it, enabled him to accomplish a great deal more in the work which was his greatest delight than many could easily account for. Says one of the deacons of his church: “When I reflect on the amount of ministerial labor which he performed here, I am amazed, both as respects the abundance of his resources and his capability of endurance. He never claimed the vacation usually accorded to pastors of churches; and his occasional visits to his native place were so arranged that he was not absent over two or three Sabbaths at a time. He

<sup>1</sup> For these particulars I am indebted to members of the family.

seldom exchanged pulpits with his ministerial brethren, but was always at his post, bringing out two thoroughly studied discourses every Sabbath. I cannot call to mind a single occasion when he was a moment *behind time*. Promptly to the minute his service was commenced, whether the congregation were assembled or not."

I now proceed to speak of the character of his ordinary preaching. And on this point but one testimony is to be heard from those who sat under it. Different individuals among his constant hearers would, of course, be differently affected—some by one thing, others by another; but the same general impression of truthful earnestness, deep spiritual knowledge, fair and forcible presentation of it, was left upon all alike. The following extracts, which I have taken the liberty to select from several letters kindly submitted to my inspection, will serve to convey a little more distinct notion, perhaps, of what this impression was.

"In every discourse," says one of these letters, "the hearer was impressed with a sense of the preacher's intimate knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, with the clearness of his views, and with the depth of his interest in all the great truths of Christianity. He set forth *Christ*, both in his *divinity* and in his *humanity*, and with a power seldom displayed."

"I know and feel now in my inmost soul," says the writer of another, "what words of wisdom fell from his lips as a teacher, the unanswerable logic with which he sustained the truth and defeated error. He was literally a *watchman*, looking out in advance, observant of the signs of the times, and by timely preventure warding off many evils and errors which threatened his people in the distance. These things mean a great deal to me;

nor do I ever forget the words of comfort which always came as balm from his lips to the sorrowful."

"If there was one feature," says a professional man, and a member of his society, "that distinguished him as a preacher, it was his power in portraying the development of Christian life and character, drawn from and illustrated by examples furnished by the pages of inspiration. Who that has heard him expatiate with his own peculiar enthusiasm on the life and character of the great apostle Paul, has not sometimes ventured the thought that he closely approximated the apostle in the power and unction of his words? To many of us in the *sere* of life will memory recall the past, the long past incidents of the religious conference, when world-weary, perhaps, we have listlessly joined the sparse assemblage, and have been startled from our sleepy indifference by the fervor and tender pathos of his *unstudied* eloquence, and resolved anew that we would 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.'"<sup>1</sup>

"His bearing in the pulpit," says the same person, in a letter to me, "though entirely free from all factitious solemnity of countenance and voice, was uniformly such as to carry conviction at once to his audience that he was indeed a messenger of God, and that he was only intent on the faithful discharge of his trust. There was always a chastened sobriety in his manner, even during his most thrilling appeals, and such a palpable unconsciousness of *himself*, that even captious listeners were made *equally* unconscious of the messenger by the weight and power of the message."

And in reference to his peculiar gift in conducting the services of public worship, this correspondent remarks:

<sup>1</sup> Extract from Dr. Chandler's notice of President Smith, published in the "St. Albans Messenger" at the time of his death.



“In order fully to appreciate him as a pastor, one would need to be comprised in his flock — to be subject to the infirmities which lead too many, through the *week*, to remissness in duty, and to such assimilations to the world, that its interests have well-nigh monopolized the best places in our hearts. Under such circumstances, how often, on a quiet Sabbath morning, have *I* repaired almost reluctantly to the house of God, with the feeling that my whole life and being was a barren waste, a stony, sterile enclosure, on which all religious culture must be thrown away! and how often have I been startled, during the pastor’s morning prayer, with his own seeming consciousness of the *same* alienation of heart and soul — the *same* sense of ingratitude for mercies abused and for privileges spurned! And O, how gladly have I striven to follow in his steps to the foot of the Cross! His prayers were not a lesson to be said, but an emotion to be felt; and if the exercise of any one function in the pastoral office may claim precedence, as an agency for good in Dr. Smith’s parish, I think it may be his *prayers*, both in the congregation and with the afflicted, the sick, and the dying.”

He sometimes preached without notes, though in general his discourses on such occasions had been carefully thought out, and arranged into method beforehand. “His congregation,” says one of his hearers, “were rather partial to what they called his extemporaneous discourses; and, except that he was not obliged to turn his eyes from the audience to his notes, there was no apparent difference between these and his written sermons. There was, perhaps, more glow and freshness in his manner on such occasions, and he never seemed to hesitate a moment for thoughts, or language in which to clothe his thoughts.”

There were other occasions, however, when it was plainly evident that the whole discourse was strictly extemporaneous, and without any premeditation. "Then," says another of his hearers, "he would commence and go forward with a steady flow of beautiful and impressive language, without even hesitating a moment in the choice of a word, or repeating a sentence for the purpose of improving it or making it more plain."

A story is told of a great effect once produced by him by a sudden display of this off-hand style of speaking, which, as it at the same time shows the deep interest he took from the first in the temperance movement, is worth repeating. Sometime in the early part of his ministry, after having preached all day, he attended an evening meeting held by the people of the village to discuss the then new subject of temperance. Having come to hear and not to take any part in the discussion, he sat, wrapped up in his cloak, in a remote corner of the room. It was a large meeting, attended by a fair representation of the influential men of the place. As the discussion went on, the balance of the argument began gradually to lean more and more to the wrong side of the question; and finally one of the leading men threw the weight of his influence on the side of the inclining scale. The minister, who had thus far sat apart, attentively listening to the debate, here grew uneasy, rose in his place, advanced forward in his cloak, and began to speak in his usual calm and deliberate manner. But gradually warming with his argument, his cloak fell, first from one shoulder, then from the other, and at last dropped to his feet. He began by gently remonstrating against such views as he had just heard expressed; represented the sad consequences of opposition, by men of station and influence, to measures

aiming solely to promote sobriety and to abate one of the most threatening social evils of the time ; then proceeded to consider what might be said on the other side of the question, which he presented with such an array of forcible and glowing argument, as disarmed opposition for that time, and inaugurated a new day for the cause of temperance in St. Albans. " We may as well stop here," said one of the speakers on the other side as he left the meeting, " for what is the use of arguing a point where we must always have Mr. Smith for an opponent ? "

But his most eloquent and powerful efforts in extemporaneous speaking, according to the observer last quoted, were at the communion table. " It was here that, when warmed with the awful subject of Jesus suffering and dying for ' man the creature's sin,' his face seemed to shine. His massive intellect seemed to find full enlargement amidst the great mysteries attending the incarnation of the Son of God ; and his people were fed as with manna and fatness."

" I have wished," says the faithful friend who collected together the documents upon which this account of Dr. Smith's ministerial life are mainly founded — " I have wished that some one of those who were accustomed to participate in the solemnities of our communion seasons, could give a just and truthful impression of him as he appeared on such occasions. Standing at the table spread with the symbols of the Saviour's body broken and his blood shed for the remission of sins, the great mystery of man's redemption seemed revealed to his faith in its surpassing fulness and glory ; and the words that fell from his lips stirred to their very depths the hearts of those who heard him. And such was the fact uniformly ; for although these sacred festivals were of

frequent occurrence, he always came to them with — as it seemed to us — a fresh inspiration from the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto him, and unto *us* through him. I remember with what tenderness and solemnity he said, on one of these occasions, “We come to this table, brethren beloved in the Lord, to renew our covenant obligations to each other and to Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth are named. We come to hold sweet communion, not only with the Master of the feast, but with those also who have gone up from these seats to see the King in his beauty, and to be forever with the Lord.” And on another occasion: “This ordinance, my brethren, is a *memorial* ;” and pointing to the distant graves in the cemetery, “as those marble monuments record the names and perpetuate the remembrance of our departed friends, so this supper, instituted by his own appointment, is a monument, sacred to the memory of Him who died for us and rose again, and is now set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and *ever liveth* to make intercession for us.” The large attendance of those outside the membership of the church, and the thoughtfulness and solemnity which at these seasons seemed to pervade the assembly, indicated with what fervor and tenderness these services were conducted.”

To give more variety and freedom to the method of instruction from the pulpit, he would sometimes resort to a familiar exposition of a chapter or part of a chapter from the Bible. Very few preachers at the present day would venture, perhaps, to try the experiment of this expository preaching before their audiences, though it seems to have been the most common method in the early times of the church, as it will doubtless become so

again, whenever the spirit of those times shall return. But the following vote in the record of the St. Albans church for 1830, shows that Dr. Smith succeeded in making it interesting enough to draw forth a petition for its continuance: "*Voted*, To request the pastor to pursue the course adopted by him for the last two Sabbaths, of occupying half the day, each Sabbath, in expounding the Scriptures; and that notice of this request be given to the congregation." I have been told that he bestowed more time and care upon these expositions than upon his ordinary sermons.

His habits of composing and writing his sermons, as I am informed by Mrs. Smith, were somewhat peculiar. He could not, like some ministers, appropriate a *portion* of several successive days to this labor, giving the remaining hours of such days to other avocations. When he had fixed upon a theme for a discourse, he became absorbed in it, and would not willingly suffer his mind to be diverted from it, even for an hour. He thought and wrote rapidly; and some of his most effective sermons were composed and written in eight or nine hours.

There can be little doubt that such discourses, rapidly but not therefore carelessly composed, under the heat and glow of a concentrated interest in the subject, and of a specific object to be accomplished, are the best proof of a preacher's real ability. They bring out all the force and talent a man has, to make whatever knowledge and experience he may possess available. They try the depth of his convictions and of his interest in the matter on hand. More elaborate sermons, written for the world at large, or under circumstances which compel a man to be constantly thinking of his reputation, may display ability of another sort, but not certainly of that

kind which persons of true taste and good sense would prefer to see exhibited by a preacher of the gospel.

That, in Dr. Smith's estimation, the predicatorial office stood infinitely above all other offices and duties of a Christian minister—that every other qualification ought, in his opinion, to be held in strict subordination to this, and, if necessary, sacrificed to it—is evident, both from his own practice and the advice he gave to others. In practice, he quickly appropriated to himself the greatest proportion of his available time in qualifying himself, by reading, meditation, and study, for discharging, to the best of his ability, this duty of preaching the word. All who applied to him for advice on this matter he exhorted to do the same. A young minister once called on him for the express purpose of drawing out his opinions on the subject of the right distribution of his labors by a pastor who was desirous of doing the most good to his people. I give only the substance of his reply, as it was set down afterwards from memory. He thought “that every man who was competent to take upon himself the spiritual charge of a people ought to be the best judge of the time which should be devoted to each part of his work. No general rule, which would be equally applicable to all cases, could be laid down. The *sick*, the *afflicted*, and the *inquiring*, should be carefully looked after, while a general knowledge and oversight of the whole flock should be kept up. We cannot expect to satisfy everybody; for were a man to spend his *whole* time in visiting, still there would be some to complain that he did not visit enough; and more, that he showed an undue partiality for a certain set or certain families. The difference in the result of spending time in visiting and in study is usually this: in the one case, a few persons only have all the benefit of the minister's conversa-

tion ; in the other, the whole congregation share alike of his best thoughts."

" Observation," he continued, " has fully convinced me that those ministers are the most *useful* who stand high as being able sermonizers, rather than excellent pastors. These two qualifications, indeed, are rarely to be found combined in the same individual. The pulpit is eminently the place of a minister's power, and his people will excuse him for not visiting them as often as they would like, if they know that he is really at work for their benefit."

" But," said he, " whichever you may make prominent in your ministry, the pulpit or the parish, don't be a *gossiping* minister. I have known some who have fallen insensibly into this vicious habit ; but they thereby rendered their pastoral labors of little value — in fact, destroyed all their influence. Avoid that error."

We are not to conclude, however, from such remarks, that Dr. Smith was disposed to undervalue parochial visitation — that he himself did not seek, as he found time and opportunity, to enter into the families of his congregation, and to make himself personally acquainted with the spiritual condition of every individual in it. He sought to do this ; and, moreover, sought *how* he might do it in a way the most unexceptionable, and at the same time the most beneficial. He made no formal thing of it — was neither over-courteous nor too familiar. His sole object was to confer some needed spiritual benefit ; and with his knowledge of human nature, and ready tact in adapting himself to persons of all classes and conditions, he easily succeeded in finding his way at last to the hearts of those whom he desired to benefit, and of securing their entire confidence and love.

“ I recollect,” says Mrs. Smith, — who of course took an affectionate interest in all this part of her husband’s labors, — “ an instance in which he was called by the parents of an only daughter, who was very sick, to visit her. She was a young girl of fourteen, and to all appearance rapidly passing away by pulmonary consumption. As she never spoke of her own case, her friends were in doubt whether she was really aware of the hopeless tendency of her disease. Being very desirous that Mr. Smith should call and converse with her, they proposed it to the daughter; but in her feeble, sensitive condition she shrunk from the very *thought* of such an interview. Mr. Smith, however, called, and, sitting down by the sick girl’s bedside, asked her a few questions, in his own gentle way, and, after reading the fourteenth chapter of John’s Gospel, commended her in prayer to the God of all grace and consolation. As he took leave, she whispered to her father to ask Mr. Smith to come again the *next* day; and from that time she watched eagerly for the return of his visits, until her death, when she left consoling evidence to her friends that she ‘ slept in Jesus.’ ” This story may serve to correct the impression that Dr. Smith failed in the particular duty of pastoral visitation.

He was skilful in dealing with persons awakened to reflection and serious inquiry, and with those just commencing the Christian life. His shrewdness enabled him readily to penetrate the state of their feelings; and his counsels were judicious, and easily comprehended. A young man, recently converted, was subject to great depression of spirits. Dr. Smith inquired of him how he got along. He replied that he found the Christian path a thorny one. “ The thorns,” said Dr. Smith, “ lie *outside* the path, I believe.”



“In his general bearing towards his people,” says one of his parishioners, “there was nothing assuming, nothing in his manner to repel or intimidate those who might deem themselves his inferiors in intellectual ability, and to prevent them from conversing with him freely, and profiting by his superior wisdom.” Great gentleness of manner characterized his deportment, and a refinement of feeling which never permitted him to wound the sensibility of any with whom he associated. The contrast between his quiet, unpretending conversation and his powerful denunciation of sin and error from the pulpit, was very marked.”

“Dr. Smith’s demeanor,” says another parishioner, “was such, in all places and under all circumstances, as to secure the respect and confidence of all classes. Every one, Protestant or Catholic, believed him to be a man in whom it was safe to confide. He was the perfect *Christian gentleman*. While it was well understood that he was firm as Mount Atlas in what he believed to be essential truth, it was also well known that he was a man of enlarged and liberal charity. He always put the best construction possible upon the actions of others; and when he supposed the intention to be good, did not narrowly criticize the form of the action itself. He was a man of great practical wisdom. He saw consequences before they appeared to others, and was useful in deterring his people from entering upon measures which, although they seemed to promise well, would have resulted in disappointment to their most sanguine advocates. He was a thoroughly sincere man. Nothing that pointed to the cloaking of offensive truth, to make religion less distasteful to the ungodly; nothing like machinery to produce effect in working upon the animal feelings, received any favor from him.

He used to say, ‘ You cannot trick men into the kingdom of heaven.’ ”

In looking after the interests of his own flock, Dr. Smith was above indulging in himself, or countenancing in any of his people, that little spirit of bitterness and jealousy which fosters strife between Christians of different denominations. In what sense the “enlarged and liberal charity” attributed to him by a member of his own church is probably meant, may be illustrated by the following extract, which — with leave — I make from a letter to Mrs. Smith, by a lady of high character and standing, formerly a resident in St. Albans, but not a member of Dr. Smith’s church: “On one point I can speak from personal knowledge, and with deep and hearty gratitude to our Heavenly Father, who made him the instrument of much good to us who were outside of his flock. To Dr. Smith, under Providence, were we all indebted for the absence of unchristian strife and contention during many years. During the infancy of the Episcopal parish, and even some years after we were under the ministry of Mr. H——, there were sources of irritation in constant operation, and which produced a deep bitterness of feeling. But during all that time Dr. Smith was above reproach or censure; and I well remember that even the most jealous and sensitive of our people never complained of him. Indeed, when I recall the past, with all the peculiar circumstances of that time, his *wisdom*, as well as his Christian kindness, seem to me marvellous. Perhaps even you do not know all the bitter feelings which were then striving for mastery among us.

“Never shall I forget his sending for Mr. N—— to officiate at the funeral of one of your little ones; nor the time when Dr. Smith came to our church and performed

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the burial service over one of Mr. N——'s family. These are at all times unusual circumstances; but there were peculiarities *then* in our condition which made them of great significance. Of his wisdom in the concerns of your own parish I can only speak as an outsider, but as one who saw enough to convince me that it is more indebted to him than to any other human being."

It would be leaving out an important point if in this connection nothing should be said of the prudent, self-denying, self-controlling course pursued by Dr. Smith, in his efforts to preserve "the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" within the pale of his own church and community. In his church, particularly in the early part of his ministry, it could not ever be said that all the elements mingled kindly together. Indeed, of what church, since the days of the apostles, can it truly be said that charity—this *only* bond of perfectness—has so abounded as to exterminate every latent seed of strife and contention? At the time Dr. Smith was set over the church in St. Albans, old divisions seemed to be laid aside and forgotten, and all, as has been said before, were apparently united together in one sentiment of love, confidence, and respect towards the man of their choice. But too soon, like many others, he had occasion to say, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bare you record, that if it had been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Uncompromising fidelity will ever bring to light the bad leaven which needs to be purged out of that very imperfect body, a visible church community. A man like Dr. Smith, in whom the love of order was, so to speak, an inbred passion, could not help being deeply pained when the first symptoms of disaffection

and distrust towards him, and towards his steady course of procedure in managing the spiritual concerns of his flock, arose. The great trouble and anxiety which such a state of things produced in his mind has already been sufficiently alluded to in connection with his second application to the church for a dismissal. Before this time, he had conducted himself with a prudence, a moderation, and discreet forbearance which can scarcely be too highly commended. He trusted more to the silent influence of a firm, but gentle adherence to the way which he felt assured was the only right and safe course to be pursued, than to a noisy, overbearing zeal. And so afterwards, when a better feeling began to manifest itself. He said but little, ever manifested a kind disposition towards his opponents, steadily pursued his own course, and patiently waited for those effects to be brought about by time which over-hasty action on his part might have put off to an indefinite period, if not prevented altogether.

Here, and before passing on to the next thing to be considered in this review of his ministerial life, a word may be said of Dr. Smith's *manner* in the pulpit, and of his appearance generally as a public speaker. His manner of speaking was deliberate and grave, yet earnest and forcible. His enunciation was slow, measured, and somewhat monotonous, with few inflections, and little strongly-marked emphasis; yet, on the whole, it was neither tedious nor unpleasant, because he for the most part had something to say important enough to make distinctness in the utterance of it the most desirable quality. A low-toned and ponderous voice suited with the gravity of his thoughts. He preserved at all times a remarkably even flow and uninterrupted sequence of words and sentences, whether speaking with or without

notes. His public prayers were peculiarly distinguished, not only for elevation and pertinency of matter, but also for the simplicity, reverence, and fervor of spirit in which they were offered.

Thus far we have contemplated the minister in his parish and among his own people. We may now consider him in another point of view — as moderator of the Congregational church generally in this part of the state; for so he might in a certain sense be called. He was summoned to act for other churches in more than sixty different councils during the period between 1823 and 1854. In how many other cases he was consulted by letter, it is impossible for me to say; only I have good reason for thinking that he was so in nearly every case of unusual difficulty. It is natural to suppose that a man whose advice was in such general request must somehow have formed for himself a good reputation for knowledge and sagacity in relation to the matters about which he was consulted. His somewhat central position to a large number of churches in the northwestern portion of the state was a favorable one for calling out whatever powers of this sort he might possess. But a cautious and respectful moderation, a facility of penetrating into motives, an undeviating regard for truth, — qualities often displayed by him in the management and settlement of difficult questions, — had gradually given him an authority among his brethren in the ministry, to which few others could make equal pretensions.

It may be said that Dr. Smith had a natural aptitude for business of this nature. He belonged, by inclination and habit, to the judicial order of men in the church. He was quick to seize upon the real merits of a case, to separate from it everything irrelevant, and fix at once upon the essential points at issue. "He had," says one,

“that first quality of a good and safe reasoner — straightforward, inflexible honesty. He would not, as I firmly believe, *deviate from the truth* to please any other person or to gain any advantage for himself. The ends which he could not achieve by fair means he would not achieve at all. He came to his conclusions by a careful process, and therefore could not be easily induced to abandon them after their decided adoption. Yet when new evidence could be presented, his mind was open to receive it, and prepared to give it all the weight to which it was fairly entitled.” This integrity, combined as it was in him with great clearness of judgment and candor, qualified him, of themselves, to be a very safe adviser in most of the cases where, amongst brethren, one man or set of men has “a matter against another.”

But he had, besides, taken pains to acquire by careful study an extensive knowledge of the constitution and government of the church in all times, of different forms of church polity, of the action of the laws of the state upon the church, and especially of the customs and usages established by the practice of the Congregational churches of New England. He considered these subjects to be worthy of much more careful attention than had usually been bestowed on them by ministers of his own denomination, on whose *enlightened* vigilance and care so many interests connected with the right guidance of the church must necessarily depend. Other churches have their regular series of tribunals, or their canons and rules, their settled modes of proceeding adjusted for every emergency that can arise. The more simple constitution of congregational church government dispenses with most of this apparatus which is so apt to degenerate into mere forms. Yet the essential end—to preserve decency and order within the household of faith—

is as dear to the Congregational church as to any other. But if we resort to more simple means to secure this end, still these means, whatever they are, should be thoroughly understood in their spirit by those who have the oversight of the churches.

Sixty councils, distributed through a ministry of about thirty years, may not be thought a very large number; and many of these, probably, were only ordaining councils. But who can tell how many important questions were brought forward, how many affairs of vital interest to particular churches and to the church at large were settled, how many wrongs redressed, how much evil prevented, how much good effected by those councils, were they more or less? One evil, at least, of notorious magnitude, well characterized by a minister belonging to another state as "a madness of fanaticism which at one time threatened the peace and order of the oldest and most respectable churches of Vermont," was effectually checked by resolutions from the pen of Dr. Smith, and adopted by the whole body of ministers constituting the Northwestern Association.

But, as stated before, Dr. Smith's opinion on important questions of church government and action was often requested by letter; and, it may be added, from both clergymen and laymen. As some readers may have a curiosity to know what sort of questions were thus proposed, and how they were answered; and more especially as Dr. Smith's answers in reply to such questions show in a striking light, as it seems to this writer, the clearness and soundness of his judgment on points respecting which it would appear that others felt embarrassed, I have concluded to introduce a few of these cases here,—such, in fact, as by mere accident have happened to come into my hands.

*Quest.* What is the custom or usage that ought to be regarded as *authority* by ecclesiastical bodies?

*Ans.* "Precedents in congregational bodies, I am sensible, may be found to justify any irregularities, not to say abuses. But these precedents, or instances, as I should call them, do not constitute custom or usage. They have no authority as expressing the general voice of the church. Good usage or authoritative custom must be from early times, continuous, and adopted generally, and, I may add, congruous with the teachings of the Word."

*Quest.* Ought a person to be voted under censure, against whom charges are pending, or to be curtailed of any of his religious privileges, until all the testimony, *pro* and *con*, be heard, and the charges are all sustained by vote?

*Ans.* "To vote a person under censure is to express the judgment of the church on the whole evidence laid or to be laid before them in the issues pending. To anticipate this judgment by a vote of censure before the cause is fully heard and deliberately weighed, must inevitably and deservedly destroy the confidence of the Christian community in the action of ecclesiastical bodies.

"Some have been of the opinion that when charges are received against a church member, he ought from that time to be debarred, for appearance' sake, from taking part in social religious meetings. The better opinion I think to be, that the church do not, by any action of theirs, disturb the accused in the enjoyment of his ordinary religious privileges during the pendency of the trial; at the same time, it may be quite expedient for the accused, as a measure of Christian forbearance, and on the rule of giving no offence in anything, voluntarily to forego some of his rights."



*Ques.* Can a church organization be dissolved, and if so, how ?

*Ans.* " My own observation has convinced me that it is no easy matter to terminate a church corporation. However loosely organized, and, I might almost say, however corrupt, it has a wonderful tenacity to life. It ought not to be attempted unless we are quite sure of success. Let the church edifice be disposed of and vacated, church furniture sold, and the avails given to the poor, and letters of recommendation voted, before the *power* shall pass out of the hands of the church.

" I am not clear that it is proper to disband a church that has not forfeited its claim to visibility, except it is by the *unanimous consent* of its members. The word *voluntary*, as applied to church organization, has an equivocal, if not a malignant import, and should be used in a guarded sense, or not used at all. The church is as much the imperative state of a Christian people as the state of laws and society is the imperative state of rational beings. Church associations are of the nature of a *contract*, and they are understood to be permanent. Rights are created by these associations, or at least recognized by them ; and these rights are to be respected, until at least they are voluntarily surrendered. If, without common consent, a church is disbanded, some are forced into other churches against their will, or they are left by the wayside, deserted of those who engaged to watch over them, and to walk with them in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. I have no difficulty in regard to the union of the churches, or the *distribution* of the members of one church among many, provided it be done with the concurrence of those interested. I do not say that one is obliged to *remain* in a church because it is reduced in numbers ; for the liberty

of transferring one's relation to another church is understood when he joins a church ; but I know of no liberty he has, on leaving a church, to pull down the house where others have found a refuge, and would still seek one."

*Quest.* 1. Has a church the right, by a vote of the majority, to compel its members to pay any particular sum, or to adopt any particular mode for the support of the ministry, under the pains of censure or excommunication ? 2. Has not each member of a church a perfect right to judge of his own means and ability to support the ministry, without any supervision of the church, unless the small sum given amounts to covetousness ?

*Ans.* " It is altogether desirable, no doubt, that individuals should concur in such plans of support as are recommended by a large majority of the church ; and opposition to such plans that is manifestly unreasonable and wanton — as it is evidence of covetousness or of contempt of the church and the ministry — is deserving of all condemnation. But — within the limits stated in the question — shall the individual, under the *moral* influences which the gospel and the church bring to bear upon him, be judge of the propriety of his own concurrence ; or shall his right of judgment be superseded, and his personal responsibility absorbed by the all-pervading, all-controlling authority of the church ? This last supposition, I must think, savors too strongly of Romanism. It belongs rather to the theory of a state establishment, of a government founded in *force*, than to the true idea of a Christian church, an essential feature of which is, the largest liberty without license or disorder.

" The duty of church members to a minister involves, no doubt, this peculiarity, that it contemplates a *reciprocity* of benefits. The ministry is a service rendered

to the church, and, like any other service, is entitled to recompense. The laborer is worthy of his hire. And a majority of the church is doubtless competent to enter into contract with a man to serve the church in the ministry; and the church is conscientiously bound to fulfil the stipulation on their part; but if they are wise, they will provide beforehand for the discharge of their engagements; and if they would not trench on the liberties secured in the gospel to church members, they will respect their right to judge of their own ability, and to determine in their own conscience what proportion of the burden rests upon them.

“ With regard to this point, however it is to be further considered, that no enlightened, conscientious man feels bound to the support of the ministry merely from its benefit to himself, or by the obligation to pay a *debt*. He is to be more properly urged by the sense of the duty to his fellow-men. The benefit to be derived to *others* from the ministry of the word is a stronger motive to him to aid in its support than the benefit to be derived to himself personally. For this reason, I conceive, the Apostles place the support of the ministry in the same class with the duty to relieve the necessities of the poor of the church, to send the gospel to the destitute, and to engage in various works of charity and mercy. The duty is all the same in kind and in its nature, and grows out of one common principle; and the rule laid down in regard to it, in each and every case, is, that it be performed with a ready mind, and in measure according as God hath prospered us. But can the church, in either of the cases above alluded to, introduce coercive measures, except as a restraint to covetousness? Is my duty to a poor suffering member in the household of faith less imperative than my duty to support the ministry? If

the church may determine what sum a man shall pay a minister, irrespective of his consent, why not determine also his proportion for the support of the poor of the church, and the precise sum he shall pay to the various objects of Christian benevolence? Moreover, if *taxation*, without the individual's assent, is proper in one of the cases above adverted to, why not in all? And again, if coërcive measures in raising money is the law of Christian love, then why not adopt the broad principle so universally conceded in secular society, to impose a tax on the *poll*, and even on a man's *faculty*, as well as on the general list?

"The policy of the gospel in this and in all matters, as I understand it, is to make the performance of duties the means of *personal culture*, at the same time that it subserves the interests of the church and of the world. The constant aim is to impress the Christian mind with a sense of its individual responsibility, and to induce the conviction that the Christian is a steward directly amenable to God, and not a mere *automaton* in the hands of the church. I know not why a man should be accounted less free, less responsible, *in* the church than *out* of it. In either case, his duties spring from a deeper source than the authority of the church; and the obligations that bind him are those which commend themselves to his conscience in the sight of God.

"To conclude: if a man gives conscientiously to the support of the gospel, with a cheerful and a ready mind, and in proportion to his means, himself being judge, he furnishes in this matter no just occasion for offence to the church, even though he find reason for not submitting to the particular measures which the majority *would impose on* the church."

<sup>1</sup> A case brought before the civil courts some years ago, involving a ques-

It could not be said that the new kind of life upon which Dr. Smith was now about to enter was one for which he felt himself to be wholly unprepared. It was not so *altogether* new as it might well have been had his twenty-seven years in the ministry been spent under

tion of the relation of the Rev. Mr. Lyon, of South Hero, to the church over which he officiated as pastor, on which question Dr. Smith was called upon to give his opinion as a deponent, possesses something more than a local interest, on account of the peculiarity of the facts, and I have therefore concluded to introduce it, together with Dr. Smith's depositions, in a note. The question raised was whether the Rev. Mr. Lyon was the first settled minister in the town of South Hero. Now Mr. Lyon, a worthy and highly respected minister in the estimation of all the churches around here, had many years ago left a church over which he was pastor, in Sunderland, Mass., without being regularly dismissed from it, and coming to South Hero, in this state, had gathered a church there, and in due time, at the request of this church, applied to the neighboring churches for regular installation. For some reason this was put off. He still continued, however, to preach and to discharge all the functions of a regular pastor to the church under his care. Finally he was tacitly recognized and acknowledged by the churches and ministers in all this part of the country as pastor of the church at South Hero. In 1840, the present incumbent, the Rev. Mr. Wheeler, was ordained as pastor over the same church, and after Mr. Lyon's death, put in his legal claim, as the first regularly settled minister, to the section of land to which, by the laws of the state, the first minister in that town was entitled. The claim was contested by the town, on the ground that Mr. Lyon was really the first minister. When the case came on for trial, the following questions were proposed to Dr. Smith: the first by the counsel for the town, and the second by the counsel for Mr. Wheeler, which I give, with the answers appended.

*Interrogatories by A. G. Whittemore, Esq.*

1. "Did Mr. Lyon, by the proceedings recited in the records of January 12, 1795, become the pastor of that church?" *Ans.* "Your deponent is of opinion that Mr. Lyon did *not* become pastor of the church by the vote of January 12, 1795. This was evidently the understanding of the church, as appears from their action on the twelfth of February, 1795, in which they provide for the assembling of a council, and propose to submit the question of Mr. Lyon's installation to their discretion. The conditional character of this action at this time implies that their proceedings hitherto, and even at this last date, were only preliminary."

different circumstances; had he not during nearly the whole of that time been officially connected with the college over which he was now to be placed as head; had he not lived on such terms of intimacy with Drs. Marsh and Wheeler (successively his predecessors

2. "If he did not, what effect had the proceedings of the twenty-first December, 1802, taken in connection with the former record, and upon the assumption that he acted as their pastor during the interim between the two votes?" *Ans.* "Your deponent does not find from the records that Mr. Lyon acted as pastor of the church in the interim between January, 1795, and December, 1802; but the contrary is indicated by the fact that a desire to enjoy the regular and stated administration of the ordinances of the gospel, was a motive assigned for their action at the last-mentioned date. The effect of the vote passed December 21, 1802, in the judgment of your deponent, was to invest Mr. Lyon — he assenting thereunto — with the pastoral authority and duties of the said church. The absence of a council to advise and assist in the installation was owing, as the records show, to no fault or negligence in the parties. Your deponent is of the opinion that, when a council cannot be convened by *reasonable endeavor*, it is competent for the church, with the concurrence of the candidate, on the principles and early practice of the Congregational order, to fill the pastoral office.

"The foregoing opinion, however, is grounded on the assumption that the church in South Hero was entitled to an *ecclesiastical standing* in the churches, and that Mr. Lyon was a *regular and acknowledged* minister. The church in South Hero, as the records show, was constituted by Mr. Lyon; and if he at the same time was *deposed*, or *under censure*, he clearly had no authority to act in such a matter; and the church formed by him could claim no place in the fellowship of the churches by whose authority Mr. Lyon had been laid under censure. If Mr. Lyon did not enjoy the fellowship of the churches, he could not extend the same to the church which he might gather. Such a church would have no claim to acknowledgment, nor their letters for a council be entitled to respect."

3. "Whether the services of Mr. Lyon, from 1795 to 1840, as pastor of the church, with temporary interruptions from secular callings and illness, and his recognition as such pastor from the year 1810 or 1811, by the clergy and churches of Vermont, are, or are not, sufficient to constitute him the pastor of that church to all intents and purposes?" *Ans.* "These circumstances, your deponent thinks, would constitute strong presumption that Mr. Lyon was in fact pastor of the church, and especially if he at the same time claimed to be the pastor. A claim which generally, and for a long period of time, has been concurred in by those who are interested to contest it, may

in the same office, and both old friends) as to be well acquainted with their views of the duties required and of the object to be aimed at. Nor could it be said that the *station* was one he had never before been led to think of, — that he had never before had occasion seriously to con-

reasonably be supposed to be substantially founded. And here your deponent would further state, as a maxim of no small weight in ecclesiastical as well as in civil matters, that things which have an irregular and even a wrong *beginning*, may in time secure public acknowledgment and confidence. The church in South Hero might have been organized by a deposed minister, and of course in circumstances that excluded it, for the time, from the fellowship of the churches and the aid of councils. But experience, and its own discreet and Christian walk, brought it ultimately, and without a reorganization, within the fellowship of the churches. And the same, your deponent thinks, was effected in regard to its minister. Both originally stood on the same basis, and they rose or fell together. The same act of the Northwestern Association which recognized the church of South Hero, recognized also Asa Lyon as its pastor."

*Interrogatories of H. Adams, Esq., of which the first three are omitted, as relating to points less essential.*

4. "When a Congregational minister has been deposed, by the action of an ecclesiastical council, from a pastoral office, can he become the pastor of another church before he is restored; and what action is necessary to restore him, according to the usage of the Congregational order?" *Ans.* "Your deponent conceives that the body which restores a minister lying under censure cannot ordinarily be the identical body which imposed the censure. If the same churches are represented in it, the *delegates* who heard the evidence and administered the censure cannot be expected to be the same. Nor is it made necessary, by common usage, that the delegates or the churches who deposed should be the same to restore. A deposed minister is restored by becoming a pastor of a church; and whoever is competent to install is also competent to remove a censure, at least to the extent in which its authority is recognized; and the authority of no ecclesiastical body can extend beyond their limits. The Rev. Mr. Fairchild was deposed by a council in Exeter, N. H., and afterwards restored by another council in the act of installing him over a church in East Boston. An installing body ought to be satisfied with the qualifications and fitness of the candidate; and if they restore to office one who has been deposed, it must be on their own responsibility, and for reasons that will commend themselves, first or last, to the religious public, or they become liable to reproach themselves.

sider how far he might be qualified for such a trust; so that the work before him, although new to his experience, was already, in a degree, familiar to his thoughts.

Dismissed from his people, he came to Burlington, for the purpose of being inducted into office, about the be-

"The action necessary in restoring a man, your deponent conceives, must depend on the form in which the case is presented. If the person censured plead his innocence, they may inquire anew into the facts. If he confesses his guilt, they may act on the evidence of the sincerity of his penitence.

"Moreover, your deponent thinks that individuals and bodies of men, in the course of time and by their own good conduct, may come to enjoy a fellowship which they had once forfeited, or, at least, lost; and this, too, without the aid of any formal action. The church in South Hero, if formed by a deposed minister, could not, at the first, have been recognized by those who respected the authority of the deposing council; but time and their own prudence have at length secured them a standing among the churches, and this without disturbing their original organization, or even making it a matter of public censure and inquiry.

"And what was granted to the church was not withheld from its pastor. After fifteen years of laborious toil in his profession, and of humble, pious example, he issued from the shade together with his church, and for thirty years afterward enjoyed the respect of his brethren in the ministry, and the confidence of the churches — the acknowledged pastor of an acknowledged church."

5. "Has not Mr. Wheeler, the complainant, been recognized by the Congregational clergy, associations, and consociations of Vermont, as the regularly settled pastor over the Congregational church in South Hero, since he was installed as pastor over it in November 1840, so far as your knowledge extends?" *Ans.* "So far as his knowledge extends, your deponent thinks that Mr. Wheeler is recognized by the clerical and ecclesiastical bodies in our connection as now the sole pastor of the church in South Hero. He is not clear that Mr. Wheeler's installation was generally regarded as strictly regular, inasmuch as it was understood to proceed on the assumption that the church was without an incumbent. Some, it is believed, have been inclined to regard it as a transaction necessarily, though not expressly, modified and limited by the circumstances of the case; and that its effect went no further than to constitute Mr. Wheeler, for the time being, an associate or colleague pastor. The apparent irregularity in his ordination, your deponent thinks, was by no one supposed to affect its validity; so that on the decease or dismissal of Mr. Lyon, Mr. Wheeler would remain sole pastor of the church."



ginning of August, 1849. He was now in his fifty-fifth year, but apparently none the worse for the wear of time. Even his voice betrayed outwardly no abatement of usual power. In all other points he appeared a strong and healthy man, giving promise of a long life of active service in the cause to which he had now devoted himself.

The day chosen for his induction into office and the delivery of his inaugural discourse was, as I well remember, an unfavorable one for the gathering of a large audience. Though on Commencement week, it was by some mischance, the same day that had been appointed for the holding of a political meeting in Burlington from the whole Congressional District; hence few people from abroad found it convenient to attend. I am persuaded that Dr. Smith felt hurt at what naturally looked to him like a cold reception. But he soon had reason to know that this was entirely a mistake.

The impression which this his first appearance made on the students — that class of his hearers who I daresay were the most critical, as they were most in earnest to know their man, and many of whom now saw him for the first time — was as favorable as any one could have wished. "There was naturally a good deal of interest among the students," says one of our professors, who was then a student, "as to who and what our new President would prove to be. We had all heard much of him as a man of influence and power; but few of us had ever seen him, and none knew enough of him to assure us whether he had those traits of character which would make him acceptable to us as President. His first appearance before us was on the Sunday previous to Commencement, when he preached the Baccalaureate discourse from the text, 'For David, after he had served his own

generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.' No doubt the weight of responsibility he was just then, after so long deliberation and so many misgivings, taking upon himself, added something of unusual impressiveness, approaching at times even to pathos, to his characteristic solemnity of manner. At any rate, the impression left upon us, as I very distinctly remember, was that while he was a man of strong and commanding mind, his views of life were so broad and generous, and his sense of the responsibilities of life so oppressive almost, to himself, that he would be even more of the father than the scholar. And when again, on Tuesday, at the close of his inaugural address, he charged himself, with trembling voice, in the awful language of the apostle, to watch for our souls 'as one who must give account,' there was not a man or a boy among us who had not settled in his mind that the new President was a man to be both revered and loved."

It may be as well to speak here of a fact in relation to Dr. Smith's residence in Burlington while President of the University, which doubtless must have appeared quite singular and unaccountable to those not well acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of the case. His family, during the whole period of his connection with the college, continued to reside in St. Albans. There was his *home*; and he was in the habit of visiting it weekly, and generally on Saturday, returning to Burlington early on the following Monday. Several reasons have induced me to take particular notice of this fact. It modified, to a certain extent, his whole relation to the college. Few men could have ventured to take the same course, with any hope of retaining their position. Great weight of character and influence could alone have

sustained a man under such circumstances; sincerest devotion to the public good would alone have induced one to submit to such a sacrifice. To have his family in one place, while his daily duties required him to live in another, was, to be sure, in all aspects of it, a serious evil. But it was an unavoidable one *in his case*; and as such, or, at least, as a very probable contingency, it must have been contemplated by him, when he consented to come to Burlington. By saying it was unavoidable, I mean simply this, that if he, who constantly suffered himself the greatest personal inconvenience from it, had seen any possible way to avoid it, he most certainly would have done so. And nothing more need be said, I trust, in explanation of a fact which could not be more fully explained without entering into details belonging more properly to the strictly private than to the public life of the subject of this memoir.

How much personal discomfort must have been experienced from a life of this sort by a man peculiarly alive to the endearments of home, may be easily conceived; nor can it justly be supposed that anything short of an imperative sense of duty could have prevailed upon him to submit to it. It is plain that so wise and prudent a man as Dr. Smith would never have taken the step which he did in this case without having first counted the cost and maturely considered whether the object probably to be gained by it was of sufficient magnitude to justify the sacrifice it must require. The cause of education generally was ever dear to him. With the history of this University of Vermont, its early and later struggles for existence, its aims and prospects, he was as well acquainted as any other man living. He very well understood, also, and sympathized with the spirit and tone of the system of education which, from the time of the

presidency of Dr. Marsh, this university had, according to its means, endeavored to establish. He had a reasonable hope of being able to do something towards realizing its aims as well as of securing for the college a firmer hold on the confidence and affections of all well-wishers to good education in the state. And it may be truly said, that he addressed himself to the task of accomplishing these worthy objects with strong resolution, courage, and the most unsparing and persevering industry.

In the early part of the time of his presidency he kept a journal — “a system of daily notices,” as he calls it, “of what may occur in my connection with college, whether intrinsically important or unimportant.” About three weeks after entering upon the duties of his office he wrote as follows: “My labors thus far, in my college connection, have been arduous, and my duties somewhat perplexing. But the habits of the college thus far have been orderly and studious, and my intercourse with the Faculty agreeable, which have served greatly to conciliate me to a station which I accepted with many fears and much reluctance. With the divine blessing, without which I have learned to confide in nothing, I may hope that my endeavors for the college will result in some benefit to it and satisfaction to myself.”

The character which Dr. Smith brought to the university, as a man sound in the faith, yet catholic and tolerant in the best sense of the words; as one who in watching over the interests of learning, would never for a moment lose out of sight those of religion and piety, was in itself a great advantage. In some way, it is impossible to tell how, or by what means, a suspicion had been pretty industriously circulated that there was some taint in the religious atmosphere of the place, to which it was hardly safe to expose the susceptible minds of

young men. The coming of Dr. Smith gave additional force to the happy influence of his predecessor, Dr. Wheeler, in putting a stop to these idle rumors. His character for soundness in the faith was above suspicion. Nor could there be the least doubt that he would take a hearty interest in the religious welfare of the young men who should be placed under his care, as their instructor and guardian; for the very meaning of education, with him, as was well understood, necessarily involved, or rather presupposed, the idea of a Christian training. And, in fact, the subject of religious instruction in college was one of the first things that engaged his attention; for in the beginning of his journal, he writes: "My mind is not a little disquieted by the imperfect system, if there be any system aside from public prayers, provided for religious instruction and influence in college. Both the Faculty and the students would seem to require what at present they have not. Any system of religious instruction for a college must probably be unsteady and defective, that is not based on the stated administration of Sabbath ordinances, arranged for the especial benefit of the college itself. We need preaching in the chapel on the Sabbath; and even preaching must in this, and in all cases, be insufficient without the support of a church organization, and the spiritual influence which can have an abiding seat only in the church. But to both these measures there are at present hinderances; and meanwhile we must see what can be done to make up the deficiency, in part, in a less formal and more private way.

"I can hardly conceive of a place where a high standard of spiritual piety, inward and outward, is more important than in a college. The conduct of all is so open to observation, the intercourse so familiar, and the

- provocations to impatience and petulance so frequent, that unless the spirit of a man be strongly fortified by grace, his example may be perfectly pernicious on the susceptible minds about him."

Many things about a college that seem in the highest degree desirable, cannot be brought about at once, however earnestly they may be wished. The same deficiency here spoken of had long before been felt by the Faculty, and every effort made on their part to supply it. Public preaching had, from time to time, been maintained in the chapel, and other modes of religious instruction adopted, and carried into more or less successful operation. But experience shows that, in a college, religious instruction, to be carried on after a regular and systematic plan, must be made a special department, under the charge of some one individual, like any other department. Until this be done, the organization of a church among the students and Faculty, as it must be without a stated pastor, would prove to be of little use. Such a body could not possibly be kept together for any great length of time. There should either be such a department provided for by the Corporation of the college, with a salary to support it, or there should be a church in the immediate vicinity of the college, in the choice of whose pastor the college might have a voice; or the whole matter must be left to depend upon the particular feeling and interest of individual members of the Faculty, or upon the particular desire which may happen to exist or to be expressed among the students, at certain times, for more direct religious teaching. Yet it may be said, that although no church has been organized, nor systematic plan of religious instruction established in this college, the duty of giving religious instruction is a thing which has never been wholly neglected.

I am sorry to be obliged to say that the funds of the institution were never in such a condition, during Dr. Smith's administration, as to enable him to bring about the object he had so near at heart, that of securing to the college a permanent and well-ordered system of religious instruction.

These funds were another source of endless anxiety to him, and called for a species of effort from which he would have been very glad to be excused. Among the first things which required his attention, as a matter of business to be managed as it best might be, was a demand from the state for the payment of an old debt, for money borrowed by the Corporation from what was then called the *school fund*. Dr. Smith appeared before the legislature to ask a release from this debt. As it was the only part of this fund which had ever been actually appropriated to educational purposes, and the interest on it was regularly paid, it was supposed that the legislature would not wish to disturb the university by disposing in some other way of so small a part of the school fund. The debt now amounted to somewhat more than three thousand dollars — a heavy sum to be demanded by the state from a college founded by itself, and whose entire income was barely sufficient to defray its annual expenses. When the question came up for debate whether this debt should be remitted, a beautiful scene ensued. The bill for the relief of the university was immediately saddled with amendments. It was amended by the friends of Middlebury College, so as to give them an equal sum to the whole amount of the debt which should be remitted to the university; and it was amended again by the friends of Norwich University, to the effect that the school fund should be equally divided between the three. The object of Dr. Smith and his friends was

to urge the passage of the bill as it stood originally, and on its peculiar merits. This course was strongly advocated by several members of the legislature; but finally, the motion passed to dismiss by a large majority. Dr. Smith thus describes the state of parties brought out on this occasion. "The friends of Middlebury voted to dismiss, after having insisted on being connected with us by an amendment of the bill, for the purpose of uniting their strength with ours. A portion of the house wished to have the fund divided among the three. Another portion affected disgust because of the scramble of the colleges. Others, again, wished to retain the note as a check on the University, and to discourage similar applications from the colleges; and another and larger number, from a sordid and mean policy towards similar institutions."

On the whole, he thought that the institution, so far from losing any ground by what had been attempted, had manifestly made progress, and that its friends had no occasion to feel dissatisfied. The note had yet three years to run; and before the expiration of that time, the legislature might possibly be prepared to remit the debt. How far this hope was realized will be seen hereafter.

If the noble plan projected by the Founders of this republic in 1777, which contemplated the formation of Common Schools in each township, one Grammar School in each county, and *one* University, as the educational system of the state, had been strictly adhered to, and faithfully carried out by succeeding legislatures, there would have been no "scrambling of colleges," and very little occasion for the begging of money, whether from the legislature, or from any other quarter. A judicious course of legislative action, on the basis originally proposed, would have placed our state system of educa-



tion, from the Common School upwards, on as good a footing, to say the least, as that of any system existing in other states. The provision for the support of one University, which certainly is all we need in a state of the size of Vermont, might easily have been secured, and the public good, which I suppose is the only thing a legislature ought to be looking after, truly promoted. Instead of this, we now have three eleemosynary institutions, and a rivalry among them of begging for the means of existence. For if one college begs, so must the others, and there is no end to it.

This is an evil entailed upon us by the false policy of granting charters for colleges and academies to every applicant, with little or no reference to a common plan. An irremediable evil: for what college is going to give up its chartered rights to another? There were long negotiations to bring about some such union or amalgamation of the University of Vermont with Middlebury College. One was quite willing and ready to absorb the other; but unfortunately neither could be persuaded to be the one to be absorbed. Dr. Smith, during the first year of his presidency, tried his hand once, and as I believe but once, in experimenting as to the practicability of bringing about this desirable union. The views which he expressed on this subject to a warm friend of the other college will show pretty nearly the aspect of the question, as it presented itself to his mind.

"Whether the colleges," he said, "can be brought together in the only way in which the thing can be desired, depends obviously on the amount of *concessions* which the friends of each are willing to make to the other. I have an opinion in regard to them who act and feel for the University, and you have one in regard to them who do the same in regard to the College. Our opinions may

in both cases, prove erroneous; at the same time, it may be of importance to be apprized of each other's views, whether they be right or wrong. The question, then, is : what, *in our opinion*, would reconcile our friends to a union of the colleges? What are they willing respectively to *yield*, and what would they *insist* upon?

“As the subject offers itself to my mind, at this time, there are *two preliminaries* to be settled; after which, the whole matter resolves itself into an *arrangement of details*, which candid and sagacious men will most likely find a way to dispose of. What then, let me inquire, will the friends of Middlebury, in your opinion, say to the plan of assuming the University as the basis of the union, and leaving the *question of its removal undisturbed*? Can they be induced to make the concession? Will they take the University as it is and where it is, if they may have the power to *mould* it so as to suit themselves? The point of *submitting* the question of location may be to *us* a very serious one; and if it could be yielded on *your* part without a reference, certainly a very great obstacle would be overcome, and the way opened for very liberal concessions on the part of the University. Concede the two points above named, and I apprehend you might *make your own terms* as to the rest, since your terms would of course be such as were calculated to secure, in the best way, the proper ends of such an institution.”

He then goes on to say: “If a reference be resorted to, the chance, it will be conceded, would be in favor of its (the University's) present location: why then make a question of it, and not rather yield it for the sake of securing a *better advantage in other quarters*, and points vastly more essential to the welfare of our churches, and to the success of the cause of general education in the state?”

Whether this letter was ever answered, or even sent to the individual it was addressed to, is to me unknown; but as it invites discussion on a subject that would naturally have led to a long correspondence, of which no evidence appears, I conclude that the subject was dropped *in limine*. The letter, however, none the less shows how desirable that object seemed to him, how ready he was to lend his whole influence towards the accomplishment of an object which promised to secure at once a more perfect unity of plan, greater economy and greater efficiency in the management of so important a concern as the system of collegiate instruction in the state. The subject, as I have said, was one that had often been agitated before; and on the abstract question respecting the expediency of concentrating in one institution all the means which the state possessed for bestowing on her young men the advantages of a liberal education at home, there has never, perhaps, been any real difference of opinion among judicious men. But the practical difficulty in bringing about such an arrangement has, as yet, proved to be insurmountable. Too many local interests and associations which would have to be sacrificed on one side or the other; too much uncertainty with regard to the tenure of the property; too many questions respecting the terms of union; too much hazard in leaving the whole matter to be settled arbitrarily by reference; too many difficulties of this sort, which first present themselves in their full force when the experiment is seriously taken in hand, have ever stood in the way of actually effecting an object which in theory seems so desirable. The first wrong step led to all the difficulty. A downright act of absolutism, were there any quarter from which it could lawfully issue, might correct the original mistake, and set everything again in the right

train. This doubtless could be a short and sure way of accomplishing what many still consider the most important thing that could be done for the interest of education in the state, and what has hitherto proved so impracticable by negotiation. But I fear that the very proposal of such a step, so contrary to all usage in similar cases, would be generally regarded as little short of infatuation.

Dr. Smith, during his administration of the affairs of the University, took occasion to visit many parts of the state, partly for the purpose of soliciting subscriptions to relieve its pecuniary wants, and partly to consult leading friends to the cause of education throughout the state, with regard to the best means of upholding and advancing this cause, and of placing it on a level with the wants of the time. He generally came back from such excursions greatly encouraged. He was not only gratified by many personal assurances of interest in the institution which he had in charge, and by the spirit and generosity manifested in several instances of individual benefactions; but he saw enough to satisfy him that the people of Vermont generally were quite as capable of appreciating the value and importance of these higher schools of education as any other community, and that they needed only to have the subject fairly brought before them to act upon it as a state interest of the highest magnitude.

This whole matter of education, as a high interest of the state, was one upon which, there can be no doubt, President Smith had bestowed a great deal of careful thought, and to the purpose. But while his views on the general subject were, as might be expected from a man of his stamp, broad and comprehensive, they never ran into the vague and extravagant. He was no schemer, but a broadly practical man; his thoughts dwelt, by

preference, upon the question how those methods which have already stood the test of experience could be made the most available in promoting those ends, private and public, which a Christian education — his idea of a true education — contemplates. That he saw very clearly what the best interests of the state of his adoption required, what hinderances still remained in the way of furthering them, and what were the most likely means for removing or overcoming those hinderances, and of preparing the way for making the state what it ought to be, and might be, with the fine material it has to work upon, is plain from what he has written and said on many public occasions. In an address delivered before an educational state convention, or on some similar occasion, he took for his subject: "The Educational Economy of the State, in its historical and prospective aspects." The historical part of this discourse bears witness of the pains he had taken to trace from the beginning, by the aid of documentary evidence not generally accessible, the action of the state on the matter of education, and to make himself perfectly at home on the views entertained upon the subject by the fathers of the commonwealth. He found them to correspond remarkably with his own views of the best policy of this state. His fundamental position with regard to the common aim of all education was, "that true culture is essentially self-culture. Whatever the destination of the future man, the *whole* mind must be cared for, its manifold powers developed in their due order, and all taught to act in their appropriate spheres with energy and precision, and in obedience to the will and the guidance of right reason." Every man had a right to be put in this direction from the first, and to be advanced far enough in it to carry on the work for himself. This kind of

education was as good and as suitable for one class as for another, and as conducive to the profitable pursuit of one kind of business as another; while it placed business, from the start, infinitely below personal worth and the sense of the manly in character. The education of the child should be to bring out the man in him, not prematurely, of course, but surely, and in the order of nature. He thought every other scheme, but especially such schemes as would train a rational being from the first to some particular earthly vocation, must necessarily have a warping influence, and tend to convert the man into a mere tool, leaving scarcely a chance of his ever getting really to feel himself to be anything better or higher; a tendency quite at variance with the general spirit of the people of the state and of its institutions.

But the *moral* element in education was the one upon which he was ever disposed to lay the greatest stress. The first lecture he gave to the collective body of students was on the subject of *discipline*. After defining this as a power that is never partial, never in any sense antagonistic to nature, its office being to preserve, not to impair the symmetry of her works, he observes that discipline might be regarded as reformative and as progressive; *reformative*, so far as it seeks to correct false impressions, to soften prejudices, to subdue vicious or ungainly habits, to eradicate unworthy sentiments, and subject to a humanizing influence whatever is vulgar or unsocial or unmanly in the feelings of the heart, and whatever is untoward in a will unaccustomed to obedience. It is *progressive* in its aims when it seeks to evoke the powers of reason and of the understanding, to inform the conscience, to inspire the imagination, to refine the taste, to adorn the heart with pure and honorable sentiments and form the *exterior* life to that style of

manners and personal address, which no educated man is at liberty to neglect.

He then goes on to remark, that with regard to the true office and scope of collegiate culture an important error had doubtless prevailed and still continued to prevail, in a greater or less degree, even in theory. The value of a collegiate course was too often estimated by its influence on mere intellect. Mind was regarded as simply an engine of power, and the only important question concerned the process of accumulating this power and making it most available.

Of the value of power as belonging to mind, too high an estimate could hardly be formed. But it was to be considered that this power is liable to be misapprehended, and hence it became important to inquire into its nature and search out the secret place of its abode.

“ Knowledge alone does not constitute it, any more than superabundance of food in the stomach constitutes physical strength. Even knowledge duly arranged, methodized, and subjected to the logical processes of the understanding, may still need an energizing principle, without which it remains an inert mass, or exerts but a feeble efficacy. The mere scholar or the mere logician is not the man to push his way through the world and draw the multitude into his wake. Finally, *impulses*, animal or moral, do not form the energizing principle we seek ; for these, like vernal gales, are unsteady and capricious, and may lull themselves into a calm when their influence is most needed, or even set in a hostile direction. The power that vitalizes all knowledge, as life does the organic mass, that energizes the understanding, that controls impulses, presides over the processes of the inner life, and subjects all minor powers to its own purposes and ends, is the *will*. Discipline, if it reaches

not to this faculty, not only fails, but does not even begin. The mariner may be skilful to spread his canvas at the signal given, and so to adjust his yards as seemingly to allure the unwilling breeze; but he alone is *master* of the ship, who, having traced the coast by his chart and explored its soundings, presses the helm with a firm and confiding grasp, and guides her pathless course, as by magic, to her distant moorings. A being of reason can be cultivated only through the agency of will. A compliance of the will is a condition to the first step that is taken; and at the point where the will ceases to concur, there the disciplinary process terminates.

“ But the will is to be considered as an *object*, as well as an agent; not only the *means* of discipline to other and subordinate powers, but at the same time also itself the highest *subject* of discipline. However *free* in its essence, however imperative in its mandates, its freedom is nevertheless compatible with strict conformity to an inflexible law, and its despotism with a most servile submission to influences from without. Firm as it may seem in a state of momentary resolve, yet, like the *needle* reposing on its centre, it betrays a disturbance oftentimes from the slightest changes.

“ Whether the distinction noticeable in different minds may or may not have its ground in original structure, in that law of variety which inheres in the same specific *type*, it is undoubtedly true, that by far the *most important* of all such distinctions arise from that early discipline which accident or design has imparted to the will. Were it possible that rational beings could be divested of will, we see not why all development and growth, save what depends alone on animal organization, should not be instantly arrested; and, on the other hand, experience strongly favors the idea that these processes are



quickened in those particular parts on which the will spends its greatest force. Do we not thus discover in the *will* the true source and secret place of that disciplinary power which is capable of pervading *our whole being*, and the application and fruits of which are human culture in its highest form of excellence and beauty?

“ The conclusion is, that all true personal discipline is essentially *self-discipline*. It consists not in a lesson to be read to us, but in a problem to be wrought out in us, a work to be done by us. There may be aids and incentives to guide and quicken us, but there are no hands to do the work for us. We may receive influences from without, manifold and salutary, but we cannot put off our *personality*, and become mere clay in the hand of the potter. The *will*, its high *prerogative*, and its essential *law*, are the great topics for thought and inquiry to him who would exalt this faculty to its proper preëminence in his own being, on the only condition on which this is possible, by accustoming it to a free but habitual subjection to its own true law,—the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus.”

This view of the nature and source of true discipline—the whole conception of which is strongly characteristic of the man, as it was not with him a mere theory, but the central principle of all the influence he exerted as a teacher—will serve as well as anything that could be said to indicate the general tone and spirit which, by his example as the presiding officer, he infused through all the departments of college instruction.

But, to speak more in detail, which I am fortunately enabled to do by the aid of one who sat under his instructions during a whole senior year: “ These instructions,” says Professor Buckham, which were in the

departments of Political Economy, Government, Moral Science, and Evidences of Religion, "were regarded as among the most valuable of the rich opportunities afforded us by the college course during that year. His method of instruction was first to satisfy himself by a few exhaustive questions on each topic as it came up, that we had mastered the position of the text-book, and then, somewhat in the form of a lecture, and evidently as the result of much preparation, to set forth his own views of the subject,—sometimes modifying the too narrow or too sweeping deductions of an *a priori* logic unschooled in experience, as he regarded some of the positions in Wayland's Moral Science; sometimes correcting views which more recent facts and investigations have shown to be erroneous, as with some of the doctrines of Say's Political Economy; sometimes, as in Butler's Analogy, building up an independent argument, which, while it left the original one unassailed, and availed itself of its best parts, was presented as more satisfactory to his own mind. And what most surprised and charmed us in all this, was the wealth of practical knowledge of history, of men, of facts, by which all his positions were fortified, so that, however much he might dissent from the text-book, we never had a doubt that he was in the right. Nor was it without its influence upon young men, too familiar with the loose and slovenly language in which educated men of the present day often allow themselves to speak, that his instructions were always conveyed in that stately, periodic, somewhat formal but not pedantic style, which every one remembers who ever heard him speak for five minutes, and which so well became the dignity of his character, and the solidity of his attainments."

I now pass to another point,—his administration of

the internal government of the college. From Dr. Smith's notion of discipline, as set forth by himself on a former page, we might form some judgment of the course which he would choose to take as a disciplinarian; that he would be averse to coercive measures, that he would prefer rather to try to reclaim those who might need it and be capable of it, by teaching them to respect and to control themselves. And such in fact was the course he pursued. But there was something in the manner in which this was done that was altogether peculiar to himself, and that seldom failed of producing a subduing effect, even upon the most refractory. I may here let Prof. Buckham speak again, who had two years experience of college life under President Smith's administration: "His government [during these two years] was, as ever, eminently kind and paternal, but it was also then strict and supervisory, much more so than during the infirmities of his later years. He was assiduous in detecting and punishing offences against college rule and order, but every one felt that it would grieve the good man to find that he to whom he had spoken so kindly and approvingly a day or two ago could be capable of any meanness or outrage. Many instances could be related, as then current among college *notabilia*, of reckless and headstrong offenders subdued to tears and turned to better things by an interview with the president." And he remarks further, in relation to the paternal interest manifested by the president for the welfare of every young man who applied to him for advice, "that during the senior year especially, many of us had occasion to consult him with reference to our plans for life; and I have often since wondered at the earnestness with which he entered into our schemes, and the pains he took to help us to wise and judicious conclusions."

The point he aimed at, in administering reproof or censure, when called for, was manifestly to lead the way to a substantial reformation of character, rather than to punish incidental faults. In subjects apparently the most irreclaimable, he was still on the watch for some favorable opening by which to gain access to their better feelings. He cherished a hopeful spirit towards all young men. When the interests of order or the common good required that a student should be sent home to his parents, he never omitted, in giving the reasons for this to the parties concerned, to notice also such redeemable traits of character, or features in the case, as left room to hope for better things in the future. This appears from the letters addressed to parents which he has recorded in his journal.

In the opinion of Mrs. Smith, the last six years of her husband's life, during which he was connected with the college, were more laborious than any other six years. I am inclined to think that this was exactly so; notwithstanding the many interruptions to active labor which he experienced from frequent returns of ill-health. "Separated from his family most of the time," she observes in a note, "and consequently from domestic cares, he was able to give himself wholly to his work. In one of his letters to me," she continues, "soon after he went to Burlington, he says, 'I intend to spare myself in no efforts to serve the college and to be useful to the young men; and having done this, I wish to feel quiet as to the result:' under another date, 'I intend while here to work unsparingly for the college,' and still later 'I have labored since I returned to the utmost of my strength, and have not had a moment to spare to say a word to you at home;' and again, 'I am now working at the rate of fifteen hours daily.'"

As to what he accomplished, it may be said without disparagement to his predecessors in the same office, that no six years in the history of the university witnessed greater prosperity than the six years during his administration of its affairs. Among other results, may be noticed the following ; that he relieved the institution, by wise and prudent management, of a long standing and harassing debt to the state ;<sup>1</sup> that he added by subscriptions, obtained by him personally, or under his direction, some fifteen thousand dollars to the Treasury ; that he increased the number of active friends to the Institution ; that he gained for it more secure hold in the confidence and good will of the churches ; that he did much towards exciting in the community at large a deeper interest in the cause of good education. I say nothing here of his lectures and lessons within the university, and of the healthy tone of feeling which his management of its interior discipline carefully maintained.

Sometimes, after spending a week, of which every disposable moment had been employed in hard work, he would, instead of going home to his family at St. Albans, go to preach on the Sabbath in some one of the neighboring villages. This doubtless was undertaking to do too much, though he thought he had an apology for it. Thus I find the following entry in his journal : " Oct. 14th, Sab. eve. Preached twice at the centre church in Colchester ; feel tired and worn at the chest by the labors of the day, having had a fatiguing week preceding, and an attack of asthma this morning. But it is

<sup>1</sup> This debt was finally settled by obtaining the consent of the legislature to subtract the whole interest which had been paid by the university from the original note, and to divide the balance then remaining between the colleges at Middlebury and at Norwich. Thus the whole amount went to the purposes of education in the state.

better to preach when I feel able to do it, than not to preach. It seems more like the Sabbath, and my feelings are more enlivened than when I simply hear."

The necessity of being separated so much from his family was another circumstance which probably wore upon his health, far beyond what he was conscious of, or was ever willing to admit. Very often he writes to relieve his friends from anxiety about himself, as long as he knew that they were doing well. Thus, in a letter to Mrs. Smith, dated Feb. 1850, he says: "I shall make myself quite content, and even enjoy myself, if I hear *you* are all well, and things go on well about me. I busy myself pretty closely from morning to evening; and the days seem short, but I feel fresh and cheerful, and I know no good reason why I should not be quite happy." But the least solicitude about his family changes his tone. Thus, a few months later, he writes, "I hope to go home this week: I get at times very impatient with this manner of life. I wish to be with my family, and want to have *all* the family together. To go home once in a fortnight, and then to be torn away again, is a cruel way of living."

In the autumn of 1853 an observable change in the state of his general health began to be remarked by his friends here in Burlington. Although he manifested no immediate alarm about himself, yet from intimations which he dropped, and from other circumstances, we feared that he contemplated resigning. "He was now," says one of our professors who was at that time a tutor residing in college, "less steadily at his post than formerly. His heart seemed to be more with his household in St. Albans than with the university. His government was less vigorous, and his presence, which had so salutary an influence over the wayward and thought-

less, was sadly missed. Still, whenever he was at his post, if it was only for a few days now and then, as was the case during much of the year, there was such a power that came with him, such evident delight on the part of both officers and students, when he was seen coming, with his well-known gait, over the college green, to evening prayers ; such solemnity and impressiveness in his Chapel services ; such weight in the few words of admonition he might have occasion to address to the students, that there was a universal feeling that, after all, feeble as he was, and incapable of performing all his duties, we could not afford to exchange him for the most vigorous and efficient President that, in the event of his resignation, the university could secure."

At length, in the spring of this year he expressed to the Faculty his intention of resigning. This communication was received with the same feeling of regret by the Faculty, and by all others who heard of it. Sensible as we were that the state of his health at this time required some relaxation from the severer duties of his position, yet, as he had often recovered from apparently similar attacks of the same nature, we could not but hope and believe that by a temporary suspension of his labors, his health might improve, without his taking a step which would deprive the university of the advantage of his influence and of his future devotion to its interests. In compliance with the urgent wishes of the Faculty, he consented to withhold his resignation for the present. It was about this time, I think, that he went to Boston, for the purpose of submitting his case to the examination of Dr. Jackson, whose opinion he had been advised to consult. He came back encouraged ; and, relieved of his worst apprehensions, went about his duties much as usual. The bad symptoms of his case, however,

rather increasing than otherwise during the summer, he felt it to be his duty to give in his resignation to the corporation at their next meeting, in August 1854. As the corporation felt the same unwillingness to lose the valuable services of Dr. Smith as had already been expressed by the Faculty, and as the President had not assigned any specific reason for wishing to resign, they appointed a committee to express their high regard for his personal character, their cordial appreciation of the ability and integrity and efficiency with which he had discharged the duties of his office, and their regret that he should have tendered his resignation, "with a request that he would make known to the Board the reasons which might have influenced him to this course." The reply being simply "ill health," the Board still earnestly requested that he would alter, or at least postpone, his decision. Out of respect to the wishes thus expressed, the President consented to make his decision as to the withdrawal of his letter of resignation to depend upon his restoration to health, and desired that the action of the Board upon his letter might be suspended for the present. The matter was accordingly thus left in suspense for a year, during which time President Smith continued to perform the functions of his office so far as his health and strength permitted him to do so. At the next commencement, in August 1855, finding that he had done all he could, he requested the corporation to accept his resignation, which they did; and after the appointment of his successor, in the following November, he returned for the last time to his family at St. Albans.

Dr. Smith had not too soon released himself from the cares of the Presidency: there was but a short interval between the termination of his connection with the College and the termination of his mortal career. From the



time when he first thought of resigning, which was two years before he actually resigned, his health had been declining, gradually but surely. On the 4th of February, 1856, he was obliged to take his bed. His physicians, at first, held out the hope that he might rally from this attack, as he had done from many others of a similar kind before. But he gradually sunk under it until the 13th of February, when he expired.

The following account of the closing scene, which could be given only by one who was constantly at his side, but without which this narrative would be felt to be incomplete, exhibits in a striking manner the perfect consistency of character which this eminently good man was enabled to preserve down to the very last act of his life, his humility, his modest reserve in speaking of himself and of his own hopes, his thoughtful regard for others, his sense of his own unworthiness, his deep founded and firm trust in God through Christ, and his care, manifested to the last moment, for the church and its institutions.

"The few remarks," says Mrs. Smith, "which he made from time to time during these last days of his life, were incidental; usually in reply to some question, or to some remark made by others. That a confiding acquiescence in the divine appointments, and the peace of God thence resulting, were vouchsafed to him in large measure, we could not doubt.

"When he found that his disorder would probably have a fatal termination, he said repeatedly, 'I do not wish my family to be alarmed.' It was said to him, that few fathers whose children were so numerous were so sincerely loved and respected by every one of them as he was. He replied, 'It is a comfort to know it, for if there is anything I have been ambitious for in life, it is the

love and esteem of my own family.' When asked if he had any message for his absent children, 'I wish they were here, that I might say a few words to each of them; but it is all right; *God is good.*' To one of the deacons of our church he remarked, 'God will never forsake his people; but they must put their trust in him: give my reverend love to your mother, — she has been a mother to me; — from her advanced age, I expect soon to meet her in happier scenes.' (In just a year from his own death, this mother in Israel followed her beloved pastor to participate, as we trust, in those 'happier scenes.')

"To another of the deacons, whom he addressed as his *Christian brother*, and who had reminded him that, if he himself was a child of God, he owed it to his instrumentality, and that he regarded him as his *spiritual father* in Christ, Mr. Smith replied, 'there will be *no distinction* in heaven.' Deacon — inquired if the great truths he had declared to others were his own comfort and support: 'They are everything,' he said; 'all else turns to nonsense.'

"To a friend who expressed pity and sympathy for him in his afflicted state, he remarked, 'I have no reason to complain. If I do not recover, unworthy as I am, I trust *I shall find rest*; and God, who has taken care of us for more than thirty years, will take care of us still.' To another, 'My times are in God's hand. He has taken care of me all my life long, and I have wanted no good thing; I can leave the future with him.' On another occasion, when questioned in regard to his faith and hope, he said, 'I have, I trust, submitted myself to a better righteousness than my own, and through that I hope for eternal life, *not for any worth or worthiness in me*, — I like that expression:' To a brother in the ministry he expressed his regret that he had, of late, been pre-

vented by the feeble state of his health from attending public worship on the Sabbath, and feared that his example might lend countenance to those who desert the sanctuary, and make no account of the Lord's day. He lamented the decline of that Christian courtesy and hospitality which characterized the intercourse of the ministry in days gone by. A few hours before his death, I said to him, 'you have got almost to the Celestial City.' He made no reply for a moment, and then said with energy 'God in Christ, God in the Christian, — how simple and plain this will soon be!' Soon after, to one who said 'I hope the Saviour is with you now,' he replied, 'I think he is; else why this peace?' The physician examined his pulse, and he inquired the result. He was told that the pulsation in the wrist had ceased several hours since. He then turned on his side and said to me 'I am almost gone,' and a few moments afterwards gently breathed out his mortal life.

"I might have mentioned his last act, so like himself; just before he ceased to breathe, when he could *speak* no more, he *motioned* to a friend who was standing by his bed, *to be seated*."

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In his person, Dr. Smith was rather above the medium size, inclined to be tall, but with a habit somewhat thinned and emaciated by the asthmatic complaint with which he was for many years periodically afflicted. His features, strongly moulded, and naturally of a grave and serious cast, readily lighted up into an expression of kindly good humor in conversation. In manners, some might think him somewhat staid and formal; but certainly nothing of this kind was assumed by him. To his friends, he ever appeared simple and unaffected.

He was manly, independent, and self-reliant; clear in his convictions, frank in avowing, firm in maintaining them. Yet he was neither overbearing, nor impatient of contradiction, but uniformly gentle, modest, and courteous in his intercourse with all men. He had that combination of qualities which constitutes force of character, and was formed to be a leader of others, rather than to be led. But although he could not help being conscious of the advantage which this gave him to push his way in the world, he showed no ambition to use it for this purpose, or for any other than to benefit his fellow-men. There can be no doubt that the petition which was so often on his lips,—“ May we have grace to serve our generation according to the will of God,”—expressed the ruling desire of his heart, though no man’s opinion, perhaps, was more often consulted, both on ecclesiastical and on other public matters; yet no man was less inclined to set up himself as an oracle, or less desirous to be treated or regarded as such. He neither sought nor loved the upper places anywhere; but the rule of our Lord—“ One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren ”—was naturally and gracefully carried out by him in all the relations of life.

He carried this temper even into his family,—a little society within itself. In this beloved circle he chose to put aside his right of sovereignty, as he disclaimed all title to peculiar privileges, preferring rather to be regarded as an equal among equals. “ What made his daily life so beautiful and impressive to us of his household,” says Mrs. Smith, “ was his remarkable freedom from selfishness, even in its most harmless and plausible forms, together with the unvarying politeness of his demeanor, at all times and under all circumstances. No man could be less exacting in his own family; none more unmind-

ful of his own, or thoughtful of the comforts of others. No peculiar privileges, no special comforts and indulgences were ever claimed, or even allowed by him, on his own behalf. Indeed, he would never suffer another to do for him what he could do for himself. His power of self-control was so uniform, that much as we loved him, we could never fail to respect and even reverence him. In his intercourse with his family, he was patient and forbearing, generous and confiding, and most affectionate."

It was more by the constancy of his example, than by outward acts of paternal authority, that he governed his numerous household. The younger members of the family all felt its influence before and without knowing why. "I can remember first" says one of them, "the unreasoning faith by which, as a child, I knew that all my father did and said was just and right. I reflect how, as I grew toward manhood, this faith in him never wavered, but grew firmer and firmer. I recall how I first learned to note the healthful manhood and vigor which characterized him in all his acts and thoughts; the activity and positiveness of his life; his endurance under trial and sorrow; his gentleness and forbearance under injury;—how unconsciously noting all this, my love and reverence for him grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength; and yet when I sit down to explain all this to those who knew him not as we knew him, I feel how powerless and unsatisfactory are the words I use to express what I feel."

It was always pleasant to meet the head of this family in his own home, and at his own fire-side; for as he was a "lover of hospitality, a lover of good men," and any poor worthy brother would be accepted as such by him, you were not only sure of finding a welcome, but

your host in a genial frame, and ready to do his best to entertain you. Nowhere else did his social qualities appear to greater advantage. His conversation, which under any circumstances was agreeable and improving to most persons, because always pertinent and flowing out of a full mind, here partook of a certain domestic warmth, familiarity, and heartiness, which called forth a corresponding feeling in all who took part in it.

Though not what we call a learned man, Dr. Smith possessed a mind well furnished with all useful knowledge, while his information, on the subjects to which he had given particular attention, was ever characterized by its accuracy. He could engage with interest and intelligence, therefore, in almost any discussion which kept this side the mere technicalities of science, and he sometimes surprised his friends by unexpectedly showing an ability to inform them where they thought of informing him. "In all the discussions I have witnessed between him and others," says one, "and all my own free intercourse with him, there seemed to myself to be no department of human knowledge, in which he was not *at home*. In history, geography, natural science, civil government, finance, agriculture, commerce indeed; on every topic ever introduced, he seemed competent to give us instruction." But the subjects he had most thought upon and most thoroughly digested, were such as bore more directly upon his particular calling, — all subjects connected with intellectual and moral sciences. In these subjects he was not to be surpassed, as a broad, comprehensive thinker, and as an interested and interesting talker. To the literature, indeed, and history of these sciences he had paid but little attention, and his information on these points was scanty. But with all the great questions which in these sciences can be re-

solved only by patient and earnest individual thinking, his mind had come into living contact. He had thought himself into clearer light, and more satisfactory views on many points connected with them, by intercourse with Dr. James Marsh, for whom he entertained sentiments of the deepest respect and veneration. He was first attracted to that good man by his moral worth, and the sincerity and purity of his Christian character. The circumstances of the times, and a common sympathy of views on certain questions then agitated, brought them nearer together. Finally, they came together as thinkers; at least, so far as a mind so practical in all its tendencies as Dr. Smith's, could go along with one so speculative in its prevailing bent as was that of Dr. Marsh. The influence of the latter upon him was great, but only impulsively; and, as it put him in a train of thought which he carried out independently by himself, it appeared more in the general direction it gave to his habits of thinking, than in the adoption of a particular phraseology.

He always held substantially to the same views *in theology*. He professed, as indeed we all do, to call no man master but Christ. But of the different ways of interpreting Christ's teachings, and of bringing them into one self-consistent system of doctrine none appeared more satisfactory to him than "old fashioned Calvinism." His theology, however, was not a mere system of exactly expressed and logically coherent doctrines. Nor did his skill as a theologian consist in drawing nicely the lines of distinction running through this system, and separating it on all sides from error. It consisted rather in seizing upon the broad truths lying between the stronger lines, and exhibiting them as vitalized into principles of Christian life and action. And here I cannot do better than

to quote the substance of what was said on this subject by Dr. Wheeler, in his discourse pronounced over the remains of his departed friend and brother. The words have been kindly furnished to me by the author. "The position in which, above all others," said the preacher on this occasion," I have thought Dr. S. exhibited his power and strength, both of mind and character, was that in which men most often fail. It was when standing in the midst of his brethren in the ministry, he took part in their deliberations, and discussed with them either questions in theology, or, more commonly, the influence and power of certain forms of exhibiting truth, or certain habits of religious life and action. He there stood as first among equals. Often have I seen his mind kindling up with a glow, a fire, and then a heat, until rising in eloquent feeling and expression, as his imagination opened the spiritual and ideal relations of the subject, he gave comprehensiveness to our views, direction and force to our thoughts, and power to our subsequent action. It will be long before the members of the Northwestern Association of ministers will forget him. His manner and earnestness and power will live not merely in *their* remembrance; it will be treasured up as a fact in the history of the period, and go down to the coming years as a voice and a light to gladden coming generations.

"The central point in his theology, and in his own religious life, was the Sovereignty of God; not in any narrow and merely theoretical sense, but God as Redeemer, Sanctifier, Creator, Source, Head over all and in all. He formed his system of religious thinking and of religious sentiment with that as the guiding and interpenetrating light, in which and by which he sought to harmonize all related subjects. This had been the



method of the most logical and powerful minds, in all periods of the history of the Church. He was much instructed in this by the elder Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins, and the New England divines generally. Thence he passed to the great lights of the seventeenth century; Howe, Bates, Baxter, Chillingworth, Charnock, etc. With these, he mingled the reading and study of the early and best poets in our language, which gave, at times, an almost gorgeous richness to his phraseology; a highly imaginative and ideal character to some of his thoughts. In later life, he enlarged the compass of his thinking, and, perhaps, the depth of his religious conceptions, by his acquaintance with the spiritual philosophy. But the strong logical character of his intellect did not, perhaps, admit of so perfect a realization of its peculiarities in the common instructions of the pulpit, as to make it the means of greatly increasing his power in the sacred desk. It however opened to him a wide field for intellectual culture, and gave him new and various illustrations of religious thought, that were eminently instructive to thinking and reflective minds."

In conclusion, I present the two following estimates of Dr. Smith's character as *a Christian* and *a man*; contributed, at my particular request, by persons who were not liable to be biased by the recollections and friendship of early years, but took their impressions freshly from the man in his full maturity, and under the most favorable circumstances. The first is from Professor N. G. Clark.

"It was my privilege to know President Smith during most of the time that he was connected with the university. I remember him as a man of large, generous, Christian sympathies. His Christian character seemed

to rest on the most comprehensive views of the divine plan of redemption, and with entire confidence in its ultimate realization. He was never discouraged by the untoward prospects of the church, or of the various schemes for the moral and religious elevation of his fellow men. He could leave results to God, and wait his time. He could rest on the ideas of the eternal world, live in their light, and derive from them a lofty serenity of spirit.

“ He was self-sacrificing, because he lived for the future rather than for the present; generous beyond his means, rather than to appear even in the least neglectful of the rites of hospitality or the duties of his position. In his relations to the officers of college, he never spared himself to aid them or to relieve them in their duties. The illness of which he died was hastened by a labor of love in behalf of an officer whom he felt to be overburdened.

“ He was generous in his estimates of others, especially of his Christian brethren, because he never allowed himself in partial views, nor permitted his prejudices to blind his judgment, and had confidence in the character of Christian men. It was this that caused him so often to be called upon in settling ecclesiastical difficulties, and to give counsel upon the most varied questions of practical life, and by all classes of persons. Few men could enter so earnestly into the wants and peculiar circumstances of others, or take so deep an interest in their welfare. He could overlook little foibles, and the petty particulars that so often blind the judgment, and take into account the whole character, and all the circumstances affecting a given result. You felt this as he was listening to you, — his full eye, calm and kindly, yet somehow looking over and around you, and seeing in you and in your relations vastly more than was known to

yourself; and then came his counsel, almost certain to be good, and expressed with such love that you could not but take it, and with such clearness that you knew it was right, and the best the case admitted; and he sent you away, feeling that, having come for counsel, you had gained also a friend, and one who could feel almost a father's interest in your plans and success.

"The religious welfare of the students was ever near his heart, and nothing kindled his eye or brought out such a look on his face, as the mention of some new case of religious interest among them; and the impression made on his mind and heart came out in the deeper earnestness and unction of his devotional exercises in the chapel for days after. Indeed one of his favorite plans, and to which he gave much thought at different times, was the establishment of a college church, whose pastor should have special regard to the religious welfare of the students. And this was but in strict keeping with his entire character, looking more to the future than the immediate present."

The other communication is in the form of a letter from Rev. Dr. Pease, President of the University of Vermont, and Dr. Smith's immediate successor in that office.

"UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, September 8, 1860.

PROFESSOR TORREY :

"DEAR SIR:—I can, without much difficulty, comply with your request, that I would give you my impressions of the 'general character' of President Smith. His character was marked by traits so distinct and positive as to make a distinct and positive impression on my mind.

“ The word that best expresses my view of his character, as a whole, is *integrity*. His *moral* virtues were those which sprang out of and illustrated that quality. There was a proportion in his sentiments, and, therefore an almost instinctive justice in his moral judgments. His approval or condemnation of measures and opinions was remarkably free from any apparent self-reference, and seemed to be affected very little, if at all, by their relation to other persons. I think the impression of others coincides with my own, that his judgments were *impartial*.

“ His *intellectual* character was marked by the like integrity and soundness. This appears to me to be true in two respects. In the first place, he investigated a subject with calmness, patience, and comprehensiveness; making himself master of it in all its details and bearings. He was, therefore, seldom mistaken in matters of fact. Where he professed to know at all, his knowledge was accurate. In the second place, he had a liberal and fair appreciation of all departments of human knowledge and labor. This saved him from any improper bias arising from the careful interest with which he devoted his thoughts to particular subjects. I think his professional career affords a confirmation of this opinion. Nearly all his active life was spent in the discharge of the duties of a Christian pastor and preacher; and yet few men were better versed in all the more fundamental questions of law and government and public policy. The methods and progress of the medical profession, we might suppose, judging from his conversation, had been made by him matters of special observation and study. He was widely conversant with general literature. He took a lively and intelligent interest in all the great questions of the day. He was acquainted not only with

the general bearings and importance of agriculture and the arts, but also with their processes. He had always taken so practical an interest in education, that, when he was chosen to the presidency of the college, he seemed almost as familiar with its duties as if his life had been spent in the discharge of them. This comprehensive view, which he took of all the great subjects of human interest, gave his mind what I cannot better express than by calling it a *judicial character*. And I believe it is a fact, that, in the circle where he habitually moved, his opinions, although given with modesty and reserve, had the practical effect of decisions.

“ Like traits belonged to his *social* character. There was a generous frankness in his social intercourse which left on the mind a conviction of his sincerity and honesty. There was, however, at the same time, a dignity and reserve in his manner, which did not encourage very great familiarity. He awakened in his friends more the sentiment of confidence and respect than any of a more tender character. His bearing towards others was always that of a dignified kindness and courteous consideration. Here, also, he maintained the character of *impartiality*.

“ His *religious* character was in harmony with the rest; giving to the rest, indeed, much of its beauty and excellence. Thorough, self-searching, and vigilant with reference to his own personal experience, he was not disposed to make that a matter of frequent conversation. His confidence with reference to himself, as well as to others, rested more on the habitual life than on any transient emotions. He was decided, clear, and profound in his theological opinions, and was able to express them with great power, both in conversation and in the pulpit; but was tolerant towards those who differed from

him, not attributing their difference to unworthy motives or ends. The just balance of his intellectual character seemed to impart its proportions to his religious life; and the purity of his religious character communicated its own sincerity and clearness to his intellectual processes, and both together completed that combination of qualities which I have called *integrity*.

"I might illustrate what I have said, but perhaps nothing further is necessary to the clear communication of what you desired of me,—my impression of President Smith's 'general character.'

"Yours truly,

"CALVIN PEASE."



# SERMONS.





# SERMON I.

## THE MISSION OF GOOD MEN.<sup>1</sup>

“FOR DAVID, AFTER HE HAD SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION BY THE WILL OF GOD, FELL ON SLEEP, AND WAS LAID UNTO HIS FATHERS, AND SAW CORRUPTION.” — *Acts* xiii. 36.

IN this connection the apostle introduces a comparison between Jesus, the Saviour, and all other distinguished benefactors of men. The eminent and peculiar service rendered by the former is contrasted, in its ever-abiding, operative nature, with the brief and transitory services of the latter. Like his great human progenitor, Jesus was made subject to death, as the sole condition of his giving life to the world; but this event, while it terminated the active, and in a great measure the actual, service of the one, became to the other the birth and manifestation of a power, by which, through all time, he was to minister personally and effectively to the heirs of salvation. It was appointed unto him to die, but not to see corruption. Death was the shadow that lay for a moment upon his path, the temporary eclipse which passed over the face of the “Sun of Righteousness,” and held the world of nature in portentous darkness. But the Son of God could not be holden by the bands of death. A speedy resurrection restored his presence to

<sup>1</sup> Baccalaureate, Burlington, 1849.

the world, endued with a priesthood which abideth continually," — a priest "after the power of an endless life," — seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. But not so was it with David, and other great and holy men whose lives and deeds have blessed the world. They were called to a temporary service, and when this was finished, "they fell on sleep, and were laid to their fathers, and saw corruption."

The text, then, as a theme not irrelevant to the present occasion, may lead us to contemplate the mission of good men upon the earth, and the object to which all who aspire to this reputation will direct their endeavors. Such a man, and a man of such aims, confessedly was David; one, who after the lapse of a thousand years was held in the highest veneration by the tribes of Israel; and concerning whom, also, God gave testimony, and said: "I have found David, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." But this eminent servant of God was not called to serve his people after "the power of an endless life." A trust was committed to his hands, and he labored assiduously to discharge it within the allotted time. It was however a transitory trust, and he a mortal man; and hence "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption."

I. My first remark then is, that good men, and such as aspire to this reputation, are called to *service* in this world. When we speak of service, we include not only the idea of activity and diligence, but the direction of our efforts to some specific and worthy end.

The nature of the powers and capacities of our being, the unceasing cravings and impulses which are at work within us, and which we conclude to be innate, together

with the abiding presence of outward objects suited to attract and stimulate the mind, are unequivocal indications that a state of high activity was among the designs of God in our creation. The idea, indeed, prevails with many thoughtful men, that the human mind is never otherwise than active, that even sleep does not suspend its spontaneous operations, that thought flows on in its wild and aimless vagaries even in the absence of a volition to direct its course, or of a memory to record its transitions.

But this spontaneous activity, though an essential condition to all service, is not the service which it requires at our hands. To serve implies an intention of the mind to that end. There must first be a distinct object proposed, and, next, an effective purpose of the will awakened, subordinating the energies of our being to this object. The world, in a sense, may experience a benefaction where, indeed, it finds no true benefactors inasmuch as a large amount of good, as well as evil, bears the relation of simple accident to human conduct.

As it is the will only that raises man to the dignity of a moral agent, so it is only when the will is obedient to the divine teachings that any action of ours can fall within the apostle's category of a "reasonable service." What man, then, is called to, is a rational, voluntary service,—a service involving toil and watchfulness, privation and sacrifice. A specific and worthy end is steadfastly contemplated by the mind, and then the activities of body and soul are best directed to secure that end. No just idea of service can be entertained that does not include intention; so that a man without an object is always out of service. He may, indeed, never be at rest; nevertheless, until his impulses shall take on the law of his superior being they can achieve no valuable end,

except by accident. Now no man can feel that the demands of conscience are answered, or that the great author of his being is worthily honored, unless he make himself a servant, conscious that he has powers wherewith to serve, and that they were given him to this intent; and beholding the immeasurable evil to be alleviated in the world, where he is permitted for a time to sojourn, he knows that a life passed in indolence or wasted on unworthy objects will not escape reproof. Every good man feels that sloth is sin in the judgment of God, and that all is slothfulness that is not done with a will, and with an intention of serving. Hence he studies to be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He would redeem the time, knowing that the days are evil. Like Paul, he goes forth to the service whereunto he is called, though it be "in weakness and fear and in much trembling, serving the Lord with all humility," and it may be with "many tears and temptations."

II. Men who aspire to the honor of benefactors, will aim preëminently to serve *their own generation*. This David understood to be his vocation, and he entered upon his life's labor, girded with all the energies of his great mind, and toiled at his task till he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers.

We have before remarked, that the constitution of man furnishes indication that he was designed for activity and service; we may here add to this, that from the same source we are instructed into the nature and object of that service. No one can doubt that man was created for social purposes and ends, as well as for those that are personal and individual. The great law of fellowship in thoughts, feelings, pursuits, interests, tastes, and antipathies, legibly stamped on all the generations

of men; the sympathy with which rational minds are endued for all of their kind, the mutual dependence that appears in all the arrangements of life, and the influence which each is conscious of receiving from another, all point to the social state as man's appropriate sphere, and indicate that here he is to find a field of duty as well as a source of improvement and happiness. Man then is to serve his generation as an object, which, though not exclusive of self, is more comprehensive than self. David was not content with consulting his own private interests. Indeed, he clearly perceived that his personal, individual interests were inseparable from improvement in the condition of those around him, as no member of the body can be entirely sound so long as the body itself is the seat of disease. Hence the man who is endued with the spirit of his race, will feel that he "dwells among his own people," and will adapt his plans and labors to an end more comprehensive than his individual self. The world will open before him as the field that would engage his assiduities. By all the instincts of his moral and social nature he is prompted to do good to men as he has opportunity; yea, as the object of chief concern, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the establishment of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost among men.

Moreover, David was concerned to serve his *own* generation. His public policy, his more private schemes of usefulness, all had a special reference to the benefit of those who were then upon the earth. This was the people whom he was called to serve; although his labors, through the providence of God, might continue to influence the world for good to all future times. And he who is actuated by the spirit and directed by the wisdom of this extraordinary man, will be content

in this to follow his example, instead of amusing himself or feeding his vanity by projecting schemes of usefulness to posterity, — schemes which for the most part prove irrelevant and visionary; he concentrates his regards on the living age, the people of his own times; and with all the aids and appliances within his power, strives to make them wiser and better and happier.

If but few men, as remarked by the sagacious Burke, are able to comprehend the age in which they live, how shall it be expected that the wants, temper, and interest of ages which are to succeed will be justly appreciated? But every observing man may comprehend his own time sufficiently to understand the evils that afflict it, and the general remedies appropriate to them; and moreover, he feels within him the spirit of the times in which his lot is cast, and thus is fitted to serve his own rather than a generation that is still future. It is more the part of a puerile admiration, I apprehend, than of sound, manly wisdom, which awakens an applause for those who live, as the phrase is, in advance of their age; who, overlooking the wants of their own times and neglectful of the means in their power to supply these wants, are ambitious of a place among the prophets of their race, and to be reputed as the men for all times. But let it be considered that few indeed are alike fitted for different ages of the world. The successive generations of men are found to have each a certain type of its own, — a spirit, a set of opinions, customs, prejudices, interests, peculiar to itself; and in which those of another and by-gone age can but imperfectly participate. Hence, almost every man who is made for anything abidingly great or good, is made preëminently for his own age. Nay, the exception is rarely found historically to exist, that the great lights of the human race, whether poet,

statesman, or philosopher, have not been recognized as the master spirits of their own times. Man has a power over the present which will not be conceded to him in regard to the future; and not this only, but it is through the present, by making it wiser and better, that he is enabled, ordinarily, to influence the opinions and state of the times which are to follow.

Few minds among men have been endued with a larger scope than that of the poet-king of Judea; few hearts have yearned more intensely for the improvement and happiness of their race; fewer still have possessed such ample means of influencing the destinies of future times; yet the men of his own day engrossed the sympathy and energy of his mind, and it was an honor equal to his highest aspirations to have served his own generation by the will of God. If it might be said of any individual, "that he was the man for all times," that individual was Paul the apostle; nevertheless, the thoughts and energies of that man were eminently concentrated on his own generation. His life and exertions were, perhaps, precisely such as might have been expected, had he acted under the impression that his was to be the last age of man. It was not the future, but the present, that seemed to fill the whole vision of his mind. Like one who felt that "the end of all things was at hand," he strove, if possible, to present every man then living "perfect in Christ Jesus." Inspired as he was, to be the guide of all future ages in the things of God, he seemed to feel that his appropriate mission was to serve the times in which he lived, and to leave posterity to be ministered unto by those whom God might call to this end.

III. Those who aspire to a place among the true benefactors of men, will be studious to serve their generation



by the *will of God*. This was the endeavor of the king of Israel, and to this, according to the testimony of God, he attained. "For after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep."

The phrase "will of God" may be understood as indicating the primal source of all moral obligation to service, or the specific rule to which this service should be conformed. Among a Christian people it may be assumed that man has a rightful, intrinsic claim on the good offices of a fellow man, — a claim which meets a response in every ingenuous heart, and which will not be disowned wherever the authority of conscience is respected. A spectacle of suffering or injury awakens a sentiment of duty, — a conviction, deep and constraining, that a fellow man has a claim upon us, which it would be wrong as well as dishonorable not to regard. But a sentiment more intensely operative and controlling is present to the good man, and which is derived to him from his knowledge of the divine will, and a consciousness of the rightful and supreme authority of that will. If humanity, in all its sorrows and wrongs, can offer no intrinsic claim to our sympathy and kind offices; such a claim it is felt, inheres in God, the common Father of all; and this claim he, as the guardian and benefactor of his children, is sure to exact. "Do good to all men as ye have opportunity. Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." In this recorded will of God, the good man recognizes an authority that is not to be questioned, and he bows to it in cheerful and loving obedience. The sentiment here awakened moved David and all kindred spirits in past times to serve their own generation. Not that they

were indifferent to the claims of humanity as such : they were only the more intensely awake to obligations which the declared will of God imposed, and which constrained them to diligence in whatsoever their hands found to do.

Moreover, the will of God was the specific rule by which the king and poet of Israel was guided in serving his generation. He did not consult the maxims of prudence and expediency alone in his labors of love ; but took counsel evermore at the oracles of God. " Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God," was the burden of his morning and evening prayer. Under the heavenly guidance thus secured he went forth, girded with a cheerful, resolute spirit, to the toils and assiduities of life. As a shepherd boy he tenderly nursed and heroically defended the flock committed to his care, with a spirit more than chivalrous, and with weapons that bespoke only his contempt for the defier of the Lord's hosts, he rushed into single combat with an enemy whose very presence caused the bravest of the brave to turn pale. On the throne of his country, at the head of her armies, in the councils of her princes, in the temple of her God ; by the victories which he won, by the laws he ordained, by the stability and prosperity which he gave to the times that went over him, by the knowledge and the arts which he diffused, by the morals and piety which he nurtured among the people, by the songs with which he edified the saints, and inspired the devotions of the sanctuary and around the domestic hearth, he executed his holy mission of serving his own generation by the will of God.

And what is exemplified in the life of king David, is apparent also in the lives of all who have attained to a place among the true benefactors of their times. The same spirit which constrains to service because it

accords with the divine intention, will determine us to consult his will as to the way and manner of service. The high authority which is recognized in imposing the duty, will be left to determine in what sphere and form this duty is to be discharged. The word of God will be taken as the guide to all our endeavors; for in it is revealed to every man who consults it with an earnest, docile spirit what the Lord his God would have him to do. He will not be careful to choose his own sphere of enterprise, but leave it with divine wisdom to indicate the path he is to pursue, fearing only that he may run without being sent. His aim will be so to serve his own generation as, meanwhile and in a higher sense, to serve God also. He seeks not great things for himself, for, it may be, unto such things he is not called. He is concerned, not to make the servant conspicuous, but the service acceptable and effective; and hence, like Paul, he strives to serve the Lord with all humility, and even unto bonds and afflictions," if need be, "not counting his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy."

IV. A speedy termination awaits the toil and sacrifice of those who have chosen to serve their generation by the will of God. John "was a bright and shining light," and the men of his day rejoiced in the beams which he shed upon the world. But his mission was to preach the baptism of repentance to all Israel; and with this he finished his course, and was seen no more. Paul, and Peter, and John, those holy apostles of Jesus Christ, were fit servants, it should seem, in the cause of man through all his generations; but even these "were not suffered to continue, by reason of death." The cause of human salvation was not yet triumphant; the lost sheep were not all reclaimed to the fold of the Shepherd; the

church was not ripe for the translation, — nay, “the world was lying in wickedness; the man of sin, the son of perdition who was to go forth and deceive the nations, still waited to be revealed in his time. But these holy men were not permitted to wrestle with this mystery of iniquity, and to guard the souls of men against the mischief meditated for them. They had fulfilled their ministry, — had served their own generation by the will of God, — and now they must fall on sleep, and be laid to their fathers.”

And so is the immutable law of divine providence that each generation shall furnish its own servants, and be content with the living service which itself is able to supply. He who hath put times and seasons in his own power, hath called men to work in his vineyard, and fixed the period of their labors. The good man goeth forth to his labor until the evening, doing with his might whatever his hand findeth to do, remembering that “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither he goeth.” When the appointed hour arrives, and the shades of evening gather upon his path, he obeys the admonition to withdraw, and enter upon his rest, though his long cherished hopes are still in the bud, his plans half-developed, his course arrested seemingly at mid-way, and though his heart, like Paul’s, is oppressed “with great heaviness and continual sorrow” on account of his kindred of the human race. God has no more for him to do on the earth; he has only to fall on sleep, and be laid to his fathers, and to see corruption.

Consider, then, O man, whatever be thy station or calling, that thou, like David and John, and the holy apostles and honored servants of Jesus Christ in every age, hast a sphere to occupy, a service to perform for thine own generation by the will of God, and reflect how

short thy time is ! Ask thyself what thou hast done for the generation among whom thy lot is cast ? Thy kindred, thy friends, thy acquaintance ; the men of thy years, the youth that are bursting into manhood around thee, the people of thy land, the myriads that walk the earth with sad and benighted steps, — what service hast thou done or attempted for all these ? In what respect are they wiser, better, happier, for any influence which thy toil, or example or prayers have exerted ? Hast thou wrought and suffered as have all the true benefactors of thy race before thee, wrestling for the prize of thy high calling in God ; or hast thou been standing idle all the day of thy life ? This day, let us remember, is hastening to its close and, whether the task allotted us is done or left undone, we must soon fall on sleep, and be laid to our fathers. Let it then be our concern henceforth so to live, “serving the Lord with all humility,” “abounding in prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance,” that the closing scene of our life may be cheered by the testimony that we have served our generation by the will of God !

A few remarks to the graduating class will now close my discourse.

The close of your Academic life, young friends and pupils, is now at hand, — the hour when you are to bid adieu to each other, to your companions in study, and to your instructors and guides, and from this quiet haven to lay out your several courses on the broad and turbulent sea of life. The reflection, that now you meet as you will meet no more upon earth, can hardly fail to shade with sadness the brow of the most gay and thoughtless. It is an hour to hallow the friendships which have long been ripening in your bosoms ; and surely, most surely, to dash, as with Lethean wave, every

hostile, unkind, ungenerous sentiment that may have, insensibly perhaps, gained a lodgment there.

A question, sufficiently difficult for the far more matured and practiced to solve, is now, young friends, forced upon your attention, — the question, for what sphere of enterprise and labor is your mind best adapted, and in which its powers may be exerted with the fairest prospects of success and usefulness? Much, no doubt, depends on a wise and satisfactory choice of one's pursuit, as an error committed here proves oftentimes an error for life, forcing the mind along a path to which its talents and habitual bent are unsuited, or subjecting it to the disadvantage of seeking, at too late a period, a new field of exertion. On this point, however, it is possible to entertain an undue and needless solicitude. It is more, perhaps, the caprice of the individual mind, than the intrinsic difficulties of any calling, which impedes our success or induces to a change. The fitness of the human mind to the various fields of exertion and enterprise is determined, in most cases, by the force of will which it possesses by nature, or has acquired by use and discipline. To an instrument so flexible as the mind, so capacious of various attainment, so easy of contentment in the paths to which it is accustomed, so susceptible of fervor in all its successful workings, we cannot well set limits, when energized by a strong, determined will. Obstructions which are not in their nature insurmountable may be expected soon to yield to manful, persevering assaults.

But great importance must be attached to an early choice of some profession, and to a speedy entrance upon its labors, when the preparatory culture is completed. Professional life, like the choice plants of the garden, needs the dew of the morning. It is a matter of regret when necessity of any kind detains the youthful student

a single day from the race that is before him. It is true he may not be idle, nor his labors gainless to himself or without profit to his employers; but he is wasting on secondary and transient pursuits that fervor, — that noble, ever-buoyant enthusiasm of youth, — which gives to all the abiding, massive growths of mind, their broad expansion, their deep foliage, and, in the end, their ripe and abundant fruit.

You have been taught the lesson, young men, that true and earnest minds, high in resolve, steadfast in principle, patient, untiring hopeful, and throughout pervaded by the spirit of David, and of David's greater Son, can alone qualify you to minister to the times in which you live. Be it your concern, then, and daily striving to make these qualities and spirit your own, that you may take part in the ministry to which all are invited. Study the people and the age with which you are connected; understand their wants and the evils under which they suffer; and unite with all wise, true-hearted men in applying the remedy. Let truth, righteousness, and virtue derive support from your influence and example. Lend your aid to the cause of education and social improvement. Study to adorn the intercourse of life with "whatsoever is true and lovely and of good report." Honor the institutions of the land and the ordinances of religion; and with the benevolent of the age strive to diffuse intelligence, personal freedom, good order, and Christianity over the peopled earth. Let such aims and purposes be the beginning, middle, and end of your course, and it matters little where it is run, or under what outward forms, its termination here will be peace and its after reward glorious. And now may the Lord God guide and prosper you all, and preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ his Son. Amen.

## SERMON II.

### THE ELEMENTS AND CONDITIONS OF USEFULNESS.<sup>1</sup>

**"AND A CERTAIN JEW, NAMED APOLLOS, BORN AT ALEXANDRIA, AN ELOQUENT MAN, AND MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES, CAME TO EPHESUS. THIS MAN WAS INSTRUCTED IN THE WAY OF THE LORD: AND BEING FERVENT IN THE SPIRIT, HE SPAKE AND TAUGHT DILIGENTLY THE THINGS OF THE LORD, KNOWING ONLY THE BAPTISM OF JOHN. AND HE BEGAN TO SPEAK BOLDLY IN THE SYNAGOGUE: WHOM, WHEN AQUILA AND PRISCILLA HAD HEARD, THEY TOOK HIM UNTO THEM, AND EXPOUNDED UNTO HIM THE WAY OF GOD MORE PERFECTLY."—Acts xviii. 24—26.**

THESE passages supply us with most of our knowledge of one of the lights and ornaments of the Apostolic church,— a youthful disciple, as we are wont to conceive of him, scarcely less remarkable for the modest and deeply earnest spirit that possessed him, than for his intellectual endowments, and the important service he rendered the cause of Christianity.

The birth place of Apollos is particularly noticed by the inspired penman, for the purpose, it should seem, of apologizing, on the one hand, for his imperfect knowledge of the Christian doctrine, and, on the other, of accounting for his capacity and skill as a public speaker. The city of Alexandria, situated in lower Egypt, and on the borders of the Mediterranean, was one of the noblest monuments of the very extraordinary man who projected it, and gave to it the prestige of his own name. For

<sup>1</sup> Baccalaureate, Burlington, 1851.



more than two hundred years it was the residence of the kings of Egypt; here was displayed the commercial wealth of the East and the West; and in extent and populousness it yielded only to Rome.

But what, perhaps, contributed most to the celebrity of this place, in the times immediately prior and subsequent to the Christian era, was its learned men and learned institutions. It was here that Philosophy and the Arts, dislodged from their ancient seats by the turbulence of the times, sought a place for shelter and repose. The schools of Alexandria were among the most celebrated in the world. Here was the depository of the literary treasures of all times and of all countries, which in the apocryphal figures of the historian have been swelled to the number of hundreds of thousands, and which at last were consumed by the fanatical zeal of the warriors of the Prophet. Here, by a society of learned Jews, were the scriptures of the Old Testament translated into Greek. Here, moreover, was the seat of the African Church, which at one period could adorn her councils with the presence of nine hundred Bishops, and whose sons were nurtured for eminence, in all time, at these fountains of critical and theological learning.

This was the place where Apollós was born, and in these schools of philosophy and eloquence was he educated. Among the Jewish converts to John's Baptism, who visited this city, and with whom he associated, was he "instructed in the way of the Lord," and thus fitted to become a preacher of power to his sceptical countrymen.

Apollos came to Ephesus about the time that Paul left that city on his third journey to Jerusalem. At an age when books were scarce, and the facilities for instructing the common mind few, learned men were

accustomed to visit the chief cities, and open popular lectures in morals and philosophy for the amusement or instruction of the people. Apollos probably adopted a similar course, as furnishing the most suitable occasions for rendering his gifts and attainments serviceable to the cause of truth and righteousness. He was not at this time a Christian minister in the ordinary acceptance of the word; and it is doubtful whether he sustained any office in the church, or was even, in the proper sense, a member of it. He taught, or lectured, not in a Christian assembly, but in a Jewish synagogue, although the subject-matter of his discourse was Christ, the Messiah of the prophets. Him, he set forth to his countrymen, as worthy of all acceptance, and showed by cogent and persuasive arguments, that in Jesus of Nazareth was this Christ, "the hope and consolation of Israel," to be found. The Jewish Scriptures had been the theme of his profound study and meditation; and to the examination of them, especially of the doctrine of the Messiah, had he sedulously applied the powers and acquisitions of his mind. On this high theme, "God manifest in the flesh, believed on in the world," which alone reconciles Reason to Faith, and awakens the voice of hope and peace in the bosom of the guilty, he could discourse with unction and power; "for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

Among the multitude who heard and admired the eloquent appeals of this synagogue preacher, were Aquila and Priscilla. These two disciples of the Lord were in a private and somewhat humble condition in life, as appears from the handicraft which they followed; but they were persons of weight and intelligence, and had been thoroughly taught in the school of Christ. They

are represented as having no permanent abode, but as passing from city to city and from country to country, seeking opportunities for nurturing their own souls in the knowledge and grace of God, and for rendering aid and comfort to the needy and persecuted among the disciples. Strangers and pilgrims on the earth, we find them first on the shores of the Euxine, next at Rome, again, at Corinth, and still again, at Ephesus. Paul speaks of them as his "helpers in Christ Jesus;" and adds this high commendation of them, "who have for my life laid down their own: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." These disciples perceived the defects that were prominent in the public instructions of Apollos; and at the same time appreciated the great service which his powers, under wise and skilful direction, might render the church. In the hope of supplying his mind with more adequate views of Christian doctrine, they received him into their own house, and there privately "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." To the teachings of these unpretending disciples he listened with an earnest and docile spirit, and was guided by them to a more thorough understanding of the truth of Christ. Moreover, through their kind offices he was introduced into visible fellowship with the Brethren; and finally, by the church at Ephesus, sent forth as one duly qualified and commissioned to minister "to the heirs of salvation."

From the notice made in the text of this individual, we are led to contemplate, the *elements and conditions of usefulness*; or, the qualities and attainments which fitted Apollos, and may fit all young men for good service in their day and generation.

Among the conditions of usefulness adverted to in the text, we notice, —

I. *That of general Culture and Discipline.* When Apollos is introduced to us as a man of Alexandria, it is, as we have already conjectured, to prepare our minds for the part ascribed to him in the sequel of the narrative. With the name of that city were associated learning, philosophy, books, institutions, the spirit of liberal culture, and the aids and incentives thereto. And again, when the inspired author — studiously reserved in the bestowment of complimentary epithets — characterizes him as a “mighty” man and “eloquent,” it is, we may reasonably infer, with a view to apprise us that gifts and attainments not then common among the advocates of Christianity had been gained to the cause of the truth. All the allusions made and epithets employed, as well as the high tone of argument and address ascribed to him, — so unlike the simple testimonies, or the cool brief statements of the inspired teachers, — seem intended to draw our attention to the gifts and accomplishments of the man. We associate the scholar with the advocate of revealed truth. We are in expectation of something worthy of the place and of the schools from which he came, — something that shall remind us of the great masters who then adorned those seats of learning, — of those glorious monuments of the thought and scholarship of elder times there brought together, and among which he had himself been nurtured.

And in these suggestions of the sacred historian, though few and brief, and possibly obscure, the inquisitive, ingenuous youth will discover things which merit his attention. He will detect here the presence of qualities which even the Divine spirit does not choose to pass over in silence, — qualities which come of application and study, and hence are attainable by all who have the heart and the will to claim them, — qualities, in sho t,

by which men become powerful for good in their generation.

Culture, then, we conclude, holds a place among the essential conditions and elements of usefulness, — culture that is broad, deep, and diversified, storing the mind with the choice fruits of study, compacting and disciplining its powers for strong and skilful action in the hour of need. It is this which makes men mighty among men. Usefulness, it should be considered, resolves itself into the power of influencing the character and habits of men, and through these, as the ordinary method, of improving their condition and prospects. Character, as involving in the fine ideal of the Apostle, “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,” offers to the philanthropist not only an object of intrinsic and transcendent value, but also the determining condition, of whatever is truly good in the present or future. The nature and end of moral government, which ultimately determine all questions of human weal or woe, require that the welfare of the individual and of society be committed to their own custody. Man, and organic bodies of men, supply each the web of its own destiny. Character, with the habits and course of life which flow from it, as streams from their fountain, has so wide a control in the field of human welfare, as to leave but narrow scope for chance, contingency, or accident. The best man is certainly, in the large view of things, the happiest man; and hence, he is the most useful man and the best citizen who exerts the happiest influence on human character, and supplies the firmest supports to virtue.

Moreover, it should be distinctly considered that hu-

man usefulness resolves itself mainly into the power of influencing the opinions of men. Without disturbing the metaphysical question, whether character is determined by opinions, or opinions by character, it may still be conceded on all hands, that opinions do govern men, and govern the world, and that it is through these alone that mind can approach mind, or permanently affect its character and well-being. We know of no way of biasing men but by influencing their opinions. Facts, arguments, motives, examples, eloquent appeals, in short, all the means and appliances of suasion, seek this as their common mark and end. The aim is to create an opinion where none exists; or to supplant a false opinion with one which accords with truth; or to define with sharp, deep lines one that was shapeless and shadowy, — to give fixedness to the evanescent, and life to the dead. Beyond this I know not what mind can do for a fellow-mind: all persuasive instrumentalities are powerless only as they affect opinions. It is indeed conceded that men do not always obey their best opinions; but it is insisted on that they always follow on the track of some opinion; and moreover, that they never quietly refuse the guidance of a good opinion, except when it is overshadowed by the prominence of an evil one. We withhold men from the ways of vice and crime and infamy; we reclaim and reform, we build them up in seemingly habits and to a virtuous life, only as we can influence the character of their opinions, or add to their fixedness and power.

Since, then, to influence opinions is the first and main thing to be attempted in all endeavors at doing good, it is easy to perceive the dependence of usefulness on mental cultivation. Opinions are sometimes formed, but as often, perhaps, are they adopted; and in the one

case they may be influenced by the arguments which an intelligent mind may suggest, and in the other by the confidence which it is able to inspire. The power of intelligence, superior to that which wealth or rank or station exerts, is attainable by all who earnestly covet it; and upon this as a foundation, may a superstructure of usefulness be raised, which will awaken the admiration of all who are truly good.

II. Another element of usefulness noticed in the example before us, is *aptitude*. There was something beyond general culture, in the case of the synagogue speaker, which attracted the notice of the inspired penman, and which revealed, in part at least, the secret of that mastery with which he swayed the acute and sceptical audience at Ephesus. In characterizing him as "mighty in the scriptures," so far from disparaging his literary attainments, he would rather represent him as transcending the limits and type of ordinary scholarship; and to the stores of secular knowledge adding those that are gathered on higher and less frequented fields. Philosophy, poetry, eloquence, logic, criticism, were all cultivated in the schools of Alexandria. Here the father of criticism was himself criticised; and the prince of philosophers more thoroughly comprehended, and followed by a more numerous train of reverent disciples, than in the walks of the Academy. But there is an intimation before us, that Apollos sought a broader range of literary pursuits than was ordinarily traversed in that age. Not content with exploring the fields of pagan learning, his Hebrew mind felt the attraction of that purer philosophy, that diviner theology, that highest, most exact form of all discipline, — the discipline of faith, which the literary annals of his own nation supplied. From the schools of the philosophers he passed upward

into the school of the prophets, and sitting at the oracle of God he listened to utterances more profound, more awful, more enrapturing, than were ever heard from the science or song of earth. His studies were not confined to the scriptures; they rather culminated at that point, — the point towards which great minds and profound scholars in all ages are seen, as by a general law of mind, naturally to tend. "He was mighty in the scriptures."

But he was also "an eloquent man." Culture may be broad and exact and, in a degree, symmetrical; and yet lack the highest intellectual quality of usefulness. The mind may be fitted only, though fitted eminently, for meditative repose. There may be strength, and capacity, and the accumulation of golden treasures, and yet, like the stout, richly-freighted ship, without rudder or canvas, it lies motionless on the deep, or drifts only by the force of wind and tide. Of minds thus cultivated we may say in the quaint language of the prophet, "their strength is to stand still." Eloquence, in the meaning of the text, is aptitude superadded to general attainments and discipline; it expresses that power with which mind acts upon mind, influencing its opinions, controlling its purposes, inspiring it with nobler aims, and breathing into it the breath of a higher, purer life. It is the soul speaking to a fellow-soul, and uttering the language of such thought as all souls can answer to, but which are born and nurtured only in meditative minds. Utterance is the essential idea of eloquence, — the giving forth of thought, not to the winds or to the desert, but to the souls of men; and such thoughts as the soul of man needs, and by which it will be awakened, and borne onward and upward in earnest pursuit of the highest and best. It, hence, presupposes capacity, discipline, attainments, and accomplishments of all kinds and of the



highest excellence ; but it presupposes more than this, — a deep and cherished affinity of soul with its kind, and an habitude of mind to concentrate its powers on an end out of and beyond itself. It involves a sympathy with human life, with the living beings who surround us, with their needs, their sufferings, and their sorrows. It implies an acquaintance with the character of men, their capacity, their state of trial and temptation ; a knowledge of human opinions, and the history of opinions, — how they rise, how they influence human life and happiness, how they are fortified, and by what methods they may be corrected. It presupposes, moreover, a familiar acquaintance with all the native channels of intercourse between man and man : the way by which passions may be soothed, enmity disarmed, prejudice allayed, and the mind enabled to secure the sympathy of a fellow-mind and to inspire it with confidence. In short, there must be an adaptation of the instrument to the end sought. And in this aptitude lies the power of cultivated mind over a fellow-mind. It comes from the study of man, — of man who has errors to be corrected, vices to be eradicated, dangers to be avoided, sorrows to be dried up, a soul to be saved. And the mind that is inclined to such studies and aims will seek to become “mighty in the scriptures :” for here it learns more of man — of his true character, of his needs and capability, of the disease that afflicts him, of the “health and cure” provided for him, and the high destiny that awaits him — than from all other sources.

III. Another element of usefulness which attracts notice in the example before us is a capacity for earnest, zealous exertion. Zeal, I am aware, is a word of evil omen in these days, and enthusiasm is wont to be identified, in popular cant, with fanaticism ; and both to be

held forth as alike degrading to human nature and pestilential to the health and well being of society. Now there is doubtless something common, and something good that is common, to both these qualities; and yet they are distinguishable from each other both in essence and tendency. Each implies an earnest and fervid mind acting under a strong and centralizing purpose; but fanaticism is such a mind misled by a false idea, and enthusiasm, a like mind enlightened and guided by a great and essential truth. And this makes all possible difference between them. The one becomes a power of evil — wild, erratic, and fearful, frightful in its potency; the other an enlightened spirit of good, obedient to law, because in alliance with that truth which is the mother of all law; and “full of mercy and good fruits.” It is by associating enthusiasm with its opposite, that it has fallen into reproach among men, and come to be reckoned as one of the follies and vices of the mind. But this is overlooking the distinction between truth and falsity; between the real and the visionary; between an everlasting principle and a transient conceit. Underlying both phenomena is an earnest, truthful, energetic spirit; but in the one case it is taken up into some foolish conceit or wild delusion, and issues forth in a silly visionary, or grim fanatic and madman; while in the other, it becomes an element kindred to eternal truth, takes form and substance and vitality from it, and thus supplies virtue with its ornaments, and the world with its benefactors.

Hitherto we have spoken of *culture* and *aptitude* as instruments of usefulness; but it is the fervor of the spirit, the earnest, soul-girding purpose, with which Apollos was gifted that makes these instruments powerful for good. “And being fervent in the spirit, he spake

and taught diligently the things of the Lord," is the description given of one who "mightily convinced" his audience of a great truth, against which they were fortified by all the force of education, and national sentiment, and party zeal. A new light had risen upon the earth, before which the shadows of former ages were melting away. It had fallen, though dimly, on the schools of Alexandria, and awakened, at least in one youthful mind, ideas of hope and promise not soon to be extinguished. Tidings had been announced which were to fill the whole earth with joy, and they had called up the deep yearnings of a soul made ready to receive them. A new theory of life now opened upon his mind, casting new lights and shades over all things seen and unseen, revealing duties which had before lain hid, inviting to unaccustomed toils and assiduities, and crowned with a higher end and a nobler prize. While he mused the fire burned. The scholar pants to become the missionary; and forsaking the retreats of science, he visits the resorts of men, that he may impart to his kindred and to his race the gift of God, and guide their feet into the ways of life and peace. Here, then, we recognize an essential condition of eminent usefulness in the response of a willing mind to the call of truth. The synagogue preacher spake and taught effectively, because "he was fervent in the spirit." His utterance was earnest and convincing, because the thoughts which moved the minds of his audience had first stirred his own soul to its utmost depths. Nothing is more true than that mind is dependent on its own cherished ideas for the force with which it acts on fellow minds. An idea is a thing of life; it demands utterance; it compels the soul in which it is born to ask audience of fellow souls; like the word of the Lord, it is a fire in the bones of the prophets, and it

gives no rest till permitted to go forth freely on the errand of enlightenment and mercy on which it is sent. "Woe is me if, I preach not the gospel;" was the exclamation of an apostle; and a like necessity is felt to be laid on all men who are truly incited to serve their generation by the will of God.

IV. Another element of usefulness exemplified in the text, is that of an *inquisitive* united to a *docile spirit*. It seems to have been by slow and successive stages of instruction and study, that Apollos passed from the dim light of Moses and the prophets into the full effulgence of the Christian faith. His early acquaintance with the Hebrew scriptures might have awakened him to a consciousness of the soul's needs, and led him, in common with the thoughtful and devout of his nation, to anticipate the advent of the Messiah. His first transition, however, if such it may be called, was to the baptism of John; in which was united the revival of the spirit and power of the ancestral religion, together with a strong foreshadowing of a better hope. He yielded himself to the light and guidance that were vouchsafed, and confidently advanced as far as the lessons of the great Reformer were able to conduct him. But the spirit of inquiry and expectancy had been awakened, the morning star had appeared, and he set himself to watch the rising of that sun of righteousness whose beams were to heal the nations. It was a great achievement to have released himself from the power of an ancient superstition, and to be able to discern in the doctrine of a spiritual repentance, "the way of the Lord." Nevertheless, from the school of John to the school of Jesus was an arduous step for a Jewish mind. But the spirit of the scholar, of the earnest, devout disciple taught obedience

to all truth by the high discipline which cometh from above, enabled him to surmount all obstacles in search of the soul's chief good, and to shed the light of a noble example on his own times and those that were to follow. And how instructive and inciting are even the hints and sketches which the inspired pen has left of this youthful disciple of John. He was at once the master and the pupil, while he discoursed before public assemblies and diligently instructed those who were less enlightened than himself; he meanwhile neglected no opportunities to supply his own mind with a larger measure of that truth which maketh free. And a more admirable example of that docile, childlike spirit which the gospel inculcates, curbing and softening the ardent and impetuous temperament with which it blends, can nowhere be found, than he himself has supplied on the occasion noticed in the text. He appears before us, a young man fresh from the famous schools of Alexandria. There he had been nurtured at the fountains of science and learning, been associated with the eminent men of the times, had supplied his intellectual stores from the largest collection of books in the world, and been disciplined in the practice of elocution by masters of the art. Richly accomplished by nature and severe study, he comes to the city of Ephesus, itself renowned for ages in art and refinement. He appears in their public assemblies, wins the favor of an unwilling audience by his fascinating address, assails and overturns their deeply-seated opinions, and then bears them along, spell-bound, on the resistless current of his own thoughts. From this scene of high and successful effort he retires, not to the mansions of the wealthy and great to be admired and caressed, but to the cottage of two humble disciples, at whose feet we behold him sitting, an earnest and de-

vout listener, while "they expound to him the way of God more perfectly."

Behold in this example the true tenderness of genuine scholarship; the docile, childlike temper of the earnest-minded disciple, seeking that he may find, and learning that he may instruct. Now he explores the ancient records of Moses, and now the symbolic page of the Prophets. Here he listens to the disciples of John, and there to the tent-makers, more profoundly read than himself in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; intent only to push his way upward into purer regions and to wider prospects, and to be able to dispense a higher remedy, even the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, to a sin distempered, and sorrow-stricken world. Here is no vulgar vanity, no conceited dogmatism, no deferring to ancient superstitions, no despising the unlettered hand that proffers a light to his obscure path, no weariness, no faltering in the race; but a serious, steadfast, hopeful, striving for the prize of his high calling, and that he may become a guide to them that sit in darkness. Everything indicates a resolute endeavor to become strong, to the end that a higher power may be exerted for the glory of God and the well-being of his race. To a broad and generous culture is united a skilful adaptation of all gifts and attainments to the nature and wants of his fellow men; the flame of a holy and philanthropic zeal is supplied by those burning thoughts which come of daily and nightly study of the oracles of God, while all the habitudes of mind and heart are chastened and adorned by that meek and "easily to be entreated" spirit, which sheds a guiding and attractive light on the paths of all who behold it.

Let, then, the youth who nobly strives to leave the

world in a better, happier state than when he found it, study the elements of human strength, as supplied by the example before us, and learn on what conditions he himself may be permitted to serve his generation by the will of God. There is a theory of human life, we have seen, on which, by the mere force of human gifts and industry, hallowed and aided by divine grace, the uninspired mind has been able to assert its place among the chiefest of the Apostles, the honored leaders and guides of the church, and with them to transmit his name and deeds to the end of time. Thanks be unto God, that there is a sphere of usefulness open to the sons of poverty and humble birth, a temple, even the grateful memories of men, in which their names may stand recorded long after the influence of mere wealth and title has passed away and is forgotten.

Invited by the train of thoughts in which we have indulged, and the obvious proprieties of the occasion, I now turn for a moment to the youth in this assembly who wait for a parting word of sympathy and good counsel from my lips. For myself, then, young friends of the senior class, and for those my associates, who for a longer period have attended you in the walks of study, watching over you with paternal solicitude, sympathizing in your toils, cheering your exertions and rejoicing in your success, I congratulate you on the completion of your collegiate course, and your speedy entrance upon the more attractive scenes of active life.

Pleasant, I trust, and not without profit, has been your connection with this seat of learning; and yet, after years of confinement to uniform rules of discipline, and of exclusion from the intercourse of kindred and early friends, the anticipation of change is naturally

grateful to the mind. And though a feeling of regret passes over us, as when the elder sons take leave of the paternal mansion; nevertheless, as in that case, the mind is sustained by the thought, that they are sons of promise who go forth, and that they will prove themselves not unworthy of the home in which they have been nurtured.

Our best wishes, our warmest prayers, beloved pupils, attend you; and rest assured that in your dispersion over the earth our thoughts and inquiries will follow you, and that whatever tidings may come of your success or disaster, they will not fall on indifferent ears.

As I speak to you, young men, the thought rushes over me that we stand together in a Christian assembly and under the light of the Sabbath for the last time. In circumstances like these, we meet no more! May this solemn, saddening reflection serve to extinguish every unkind and envious feeling which may have insinuated itself into any mind, and to hallow the friendship which for years has been ripening in your bosoms; may it incite each one to pledge himself, in this place of our devotions, by his respect for his comrades, by his affection for the institution which has nurtured him, by his regard for the cause of learning and of human improvement, by whatever is painful in the past or hopeful in the future, henceforth to live for no groveling or unworthy end.

Earth spreads before you, young men, an ample field for exertion; inviting you to worthy aims and inspiring you with bright hopes and the promise of noble rewards. A race, distempered in all its members, needy and sorrow-stricken, asks your sympathy and aid. Turn not away your eye from this sad spectacle, nor close your ear to the sighings that come up from all her coasts. Look



steadfastly in the face the woes of a brother, and stifle not the generous beatings of a truly cultivated soul. En-  
viable is the privilege of the youth who is not only permitted, but qualified by liberal study and discipline, to minister to the wants of his race ; to enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the erring, to soothe the sorrowing, and shed the light of hope and high resolve on its dwellings of despair. But this is the true mission of the scholar, — this “the way of the Lord,” in which the genuine disciple is instructed. To this “high calling of God,” young men, are you all invited ; to this end are all your gifts and attainments adapted ; to this may all human culture be made subservient.

Let culture, then, in its highest, noblest forms, be the middle and ending of your life, as it already has been the beginning. Pursue it earnestly ; pursue it perseveringly ; pursue it by all aids and appliances, however humble, and with a spirit that is at once heroic and childlike. It was a memorable saying of the great artist, Michael Angelo, when, with the burden of eighty years upon him, he was found alone in the solitary recesses of the Colosseum, musing on the monuments of ancient architecture, “I am still at my lessons.” This simple phrase, “still at my lessons,” reveals the whole secret of growth in all truly great minds, — minds that achieve great things for their day and generation. To such minds old age never comes ; years may multiply ; but they are years of ever-renewing youth, — of youth with its freshness, and yearnings, and joyousness. Cherish, then, young men, the life of your youth ; cherish it on the only condition on which the boon is proffered, — studious toil, and the nurturing of a deep and lively affinity for the men of your times, for men in all conditions. It was well said by the father of modern philosophy, “that every man

owes something to his profession ; ” but remember that isolated professions are but fragments of the whole ; only means to a higher end, in which all duties culminate, — the glory of God and the well-being of our race. To this end let us evermore have a regard ; for it, let us evermore strive.

And now may the Lord God, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, be the guide and strength of your youth, and preserve you all unto his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

## SERMON III.

### THE DIVINE METHOD FOR CONDUCTING RELIGIOUS INQUIRY.<sup>1</sup>

"IF I HAVE TOLD YOU EARTHLY THINGS, AND YE BELIEVE NOT, HOW SHALL YE BELIEVE IF I TELL YOU OF HEAVENLY THINGS?"—*John* iii. 12.

THE interview between our Saviour and Nicodemus, in which occur the words of my text, was sought, we may in charity suppose, from honest and ingenuous motives on the part of the Pharisee. The name of Jesus had become familiar to his ear, and observing the quiet and serious manner of his life, the miracles he wrought, and the words of power which he uttered, he was led into the popular belief "that a teacher was come from God," and he became interested to know what instruction he had to impart to mankind.

It was a meeting of earnest minds, on a serious occasion; and, without preface or apology, Jesus began by announcing "the kingdom of God," its nature, and its relations to a fallen race, and the conditions on which the rights and privileges of citizenship depended. It was a kingdom adapted to the spirits of men, and pre-eminently to the spiritual wants of the sinful, and, in the emphatic phrases, "born from above," "born of the Spirit," were indicated the terms of admittance. "That

<sup>1</sup> Anniversary of the Alumni, Andover Theological Seminary, 1851.

which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In other words, as man by virtue of his natural birth takes on the properties of humanity, and is fitted to become a subject of an earthly kingdom, and entitled to its protection and fostering care, so by a supernatural birth is the soul endued with its own true life, "made partaker of the divine nature," and, as a "lively stone," fitted for its place in "that house which is from heaven."

But to this "master of Israel" these were strange doctrines, and hard of digestion. "The kingdom of God," as distinguishable in essence or superiority from that outward, sensuous economy, which had been introduced through the ministry of Moses, was something he did not understand. Equally unintelligible were the words "born from above," "the Spirit," "born of the Spirit." All was enigmatical and unsatisfying to his mind, and in the simplicity of a truly awakened soul he exclaims, "how can these things be!"

The Teacher, who had a perfect intuition of the truth of what he had uttered, and of its entire adaptation to the inmost needs of man, feigned surprise at the obtuseness of the listener, while he gently rebuked his ignorance on these first and essential principles of religion. "Art thou a master of Israel," a teacher and guide to the souls of men, "and knowest not these things?" In the things I have uttered, no deeper mystery is involved than what attaches to the objects and occurrences of daily life. Why then shall my testimony in these matters be declined, while other things, equally incapable of being explained or comprehended, are readily admitted? The law which predetermines the formation of the human body, how it is made to assume its own specific shape and members, whence and how it derives its life,

and the rational soul that inhabits it, are mysteries you do not attempt to explain or to fathom. Moreover the causes of the wind, and the unseen forces which influence its velocity and direction, may be too deep and recondite to be explored; nevertheless, who does not believe in the wind? Though you may not see it, yet you feel its refreshing current, and can trace the path of its desolating power; nay, you doubt not there is a cause for it in nature, and that its force and direction in all cases, are determined by established laws. Why then do you marvel that I said unto thee, "ye must be born again." Why do you marvel that I speak of the birth of the spirit, and of the power of the Holy Ghost whence it proceeds. To the consciousness of the inner man these things may be no less obvious than outward objects are palpable to the eye that beholds them; while the mystery in the one case is no more profound and inexplicable than in the other. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" In the reproof here administered to the over-cautious spirit of the Pharisee, and in declining to discuss topics, however important in themselves, which lie in advance of those that have not as yet been conceded, our great Teacher has, incidentally, if you please, evolved, — *the true method of religious inquiry and instruction.*

It is assumed in the text that the principle of order, involving dependence and succession, essentially belongs to the truths which Jesus was commissioned to promulgate; an ascending series, in which some things have a logical precedence to others, and to the understanding of which there are facilities which may not exist in regard

to truths of a higher class. Now the true method of religious inquiry is such an arrangement as shall best harmonize throughout with this principle of order. Christianity is a system as distinguished from a promiscuous grouping together of isolated and independent verities; unity and independence are predicable of it, no less than manifoldness. Some parts of it manifestly contain the conditions of other parts, and the admission of the former is essential to an adequate understanding of the latter. "If ye believe not earthly things, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

In the use of the word, "earthly," our Saviour will not be understood, in this connection, as having regard to things material, or that belong to the world of nature. He was administering to an inquiring spirit, and in matters that pertained exclusively to the salvation of the soul; hence the only things that could be at all pertinent to the occasion, were such as had a vital affinity to the inner spiritual world of man. They were those identical truths which formed the subject of discussion on that very evening, between Jesus and Nicodemus; to wit, the soul's sin and death, its need of a birth from above, the interposition of the Spirit to this end, and the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These were truths for men on the earth, things that took place here, and which might be experienced by all men; they were the principles and foundation of all true religion.

Again, by "heavenly things" we are not to understand things that are generically different from the earthly, but such as occupy a higher place in one and the same series of divine truths. They are farther removed from the apprehension of man; and though they may have a potential existence for the mind, yet their actual existence

in human consciousness depends on conditions beyond our control. They have their source and hiding-place in the wisdom and counsels of the Eternal; the sphere reserved for their final and complete manifestation is the heavenly world, while in imperfect measure only are they brought down to man in his present state, through the medium of a supernatural revelation. These latter truths are in an important sense conditioned on the former, — the heavenly on the earthly; they presuppose their existence, and indeed become truths to the mind only as the former are first apprehended. “If ye believe not earthly things, how shall ye believe the heavenly?”

Having thus attempted to determine the design and scope of the text, I proceed to offer some general remarks in elucidation of *the divine method for conducting religious inquiry*.

I. Certain elements of religious truth must be assumed as potentially present, if not actually developed, in the minds of men. It is only on the admission of this statement, that the doctrine of human accountableness, in the absence of a supernatural revelation, can for a moment be entertained. If there be no provision in man's essential being, by means of which he may become apprised of his relation to things unseen and eternal, and of the duties and liabilities consequent thereon, it is quite inconceivable that a moral constitution should be attributed to him, or that he should be held subject to the retributions of Law. Indeed, in the absence of such provision, it is not easy to perceive how the mind can be made accessible to those moral sentiments which it is the object of Revelation to awaken and cherish.

Among these original convictions of the mind we may recognize that of the being of God; in other words, of some Being infinitely superior to ourselves in power and

intelligence, on whom we are dependent, and to whose authority amenable; that the soul is subject by the necessities of its being to an absolute law of moral rectitude; that man is a sinner; and that unknown but overwhelming evils are in store for him, which can be obviated only by repentance, or by some as yet undiscovered method of reconciliation, or possibly by both. Sentiments of this sort, too feeble and unsteady, it may be, in their action to form a safe guide to life, nevertheless sufficiently developed to become the foundation of a religious structure of some kind, are common to all minds. Hence no considerable body of people ever passed under the eye of historian or traveller, among whom some form of religion, or, at least, some rite of superstition indicative of the germs of an original, religious faith, could not be traced. In these convictions, as their common basis, all kinds of religion, however diversified in their forms or truthfulness, take their rise. Even the most corrupt forms of Paganism indicate the idea of Divinity, of moral law, of accountableness, of personal sinfulness, of the necessity of appeasing the superior power to which they are subject, as pervading the minds of those who worship after these forms. And it is noticeable that the great teacher, on the deeply interesting occasion before us, makes his first appeal to these original convictions of the human mind, as intrinsically subservient to that spiritual state into which he would re-form the soul of man. Although he brought with him a special, divine message from above, "full of grace and truth," yet he forbore to divulge it, until he had first pressed upon those springs of moral sensibility which his own creative hand had concealed in the human bosom. To the ingenuous and earnest inquirer who had sought him out at even-tide, when the crowd



had retired, and the master was left alone, he discourses first of all, and in one sense as the most important of all, on things that are "earthly." Instead of answering the inquiry concerning the "heavenly," or even unfolding to him the specific end for which he came into the world, however important the announcement of that end in the sequel might be, he directs the listener to the oracle within his own bosom. He bids him explore the handwriting on the tablet of his own soul, the deep and legible prints there visible of the desolating power and malignity of sin. He cites the secret records of his own heart in evidence of a life misspent; of high and noble gifts perverted, of a divine light uncherished or extinguished; of a heaven-born soul, and born to return to its native seats, despoiled and reduced to ignoble bondage; he points him to those soul-yearnings for a higher good which have been denied, to those pangs of remorse and those fearful lookings for of judgment which he has in vain attempted to appease or stifle; and then he causes the truth to peal on his ear, and to reverberate again and again, — "Ye must be born again," "Ye must be born again!" Thus does Christ teach us to seek the first principles of religious truth within the mind itself, and by his own example instructs the master of Israel to invoke the aid of man's native convictions in guiding his feet into the way of peace.

II. Christian knowledge, for the soul of man is not only *progressive*, but follows the law of *growth*, as exemplified throughout the realms of life. Here, as in other fields of thought and inquiry, truth comes to make glad the weary and suppliant spirit; it comes, when bidden and sought for, in slow and measured steps, not in the fitful outbursts of the volcano, or in the exhausting fulness of a shower upon the new-mown grass.

The human mind itself, from the necessity of its own law, is subject to a gradual process of development and growth. It is ushered into being with a mere capability of intelligence and action ; destitute of thought or sentiment, barren of experience, and ignorant alike of its future acquisitions and of the vast and diversified powers which it is destined to exert. Long and arduous are its struggles to acquire the use even of the instruments by which knowledge is to be obtained. How slow is its progress in mastering even the rudiments of any science or art ! How toilsome its ascent from first principles towards that high and glorious eminence where faith and philosophy find their reconciliation, and repose at the centre of all science and knowledge, even in the mystery of godliness, the " God manifest in the flesh, believed on in the world, received up into glory ! " But the mind is subject to the same conditions in its pursuit after Christian knowledge as after secular ; and the same outward obstructions, and still greater intrinsic infirmities impede its progress. Here, as elsewhere, we begin with things the most simple ; things that pertain to ourselves, and come within the scope of our own consciousness. Our first lessons comprise things that are " earthly ; " and from these we ascend to things that are " heavenly."

Moreover, the progress of the soul in divine knowledge, according to the method indicated in the text, is by a vital process of growth and development, rather than by a mere accretion from without. The spiritual, if we rightly interpret the teachings of the word, — the spiritual, no less than the animal, is an economy of life, endued with its vital force and organic law, and capable of assimilating whatever is kindred to its own essence. Truth, which is absolute to the Infinite, may be condi-

tional as it comes to the finite; and the mind that beholds it may itself supply the conditions. Certain it is, that nothing is truth to us which cannot be comprehended under the type of our own ideas. Certain it is, that the act of knowing is no less conditioned on mind and its organization than on the truth to be known. Truth is truth to us, and for us, only as it passes under the law of our own thoughts, and awakens into a conscious state those forms of truth which have a potential existence in every mind. Development, then, enters into the idea of self-culture, yes, of Christian culture, and determines its limits. Knowledge is truly such, only when truth takes on a vital process in the mind; then, by a law of the inner life, it becomes, like the food we eat, an integral part of our being, causing it to "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

III. The higher and more recondite truths of religion can be apprehended, only as we begin with the more simple and obvious. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The child is not expected to read who has not first learned his letters. The youth who has neglected his axioms and definitions, the fundamental principles and starting point in all pure science, will strive in vain to comprehend those sublime conclusions which are obvious to one who began at the beginning, and was led forward from step to step in his ascending path. And we understand the great teacher of Christianity to lay down, in the text, the same axiom as the condition of all right progress in divine knowledge. He did not take the Pharisee who came to him for instruction, and, while his eyes were yet sealed or his vision unpractised, lead him up to the heights of all knowledge, and bid him look out on the broad fields that lay beneath

him and admire the glory of them. Like a skilful master, he begins with things "earthly," things that were near at hand, and which are not only certain but obvious, if anything can be so; and plainly intimates to him, that until these are well understood, and have attained to a sure lodgement in the mind, it will be a vain attempt to raise it to the contemplation of the "heavenly." As if he had said, "the principles of the divine doctrine which I teach, are to be found in your own soul; they are, or they may and ought to be, truths of your own consciousness. I begin, not by directing the eye of my disciple to the heavens above, but inwardly, upon his own soul. I uncover the tablet of his inner being, the record of his own proper self, and inquire, first of all, what readest thou there? Is it not there written, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, 'The Lord of heaven and earth, the holy, wise, and good, is my maker and benefactor, and I am his dependent and accountable creature! I have sinned against the Lord my God, disregarded his authority, and abused his love. A miserable offender am I, and there is no help in me; I must be born again, or I cannot see the kingdom of God.'

"Such is the method I employ to guide the inquirer into the way of peace. These are the first lessons which I bid my disciples learn, — lessons which are drawn neither from the heavens above nor from the depths beneath; but 'which are nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart.' These are the earthly, and they prepare the way for, and lead on to, the heavenly."

The beginning then of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is to be found in our own bosoms. And if we learn not what is recorded here, how shall we understand that which came down from heaven, even the mystery of our redemption? While ignorant of sin as

an inborn principle of evil and the source of all our woe, how can we appreciate the love of God towards sinners, or the gift of his dear Son to be "the propitiation for our sins," or understand the doctrines of faith, pardon, reconciliation, adoption, peace with God, and everlasting life? No one can be supposed to comprehend the remedy who has not first understood the power and the malignity of the disease. The sounds of country, home, and rest fall in all their sweet and subduing power only on the ear of the pilgrim, far removed from the objects of his love, and wearied and worn by the toils of the way. It is only as we feel the force and application of Christ's words, "verily, ye must be born again," that we can interpret the heavenly message, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

IV. The true method for conducting religious inquiry requires that divine truth become *subjective* and *experimental*. In its outward and objective state, truth fails to be an instrument of self-culture. Although arrayed in the most severe forms of science, or made attractive by all the decorations of art and elocution, yet, like organic matter, it subserves the ends of life only as it enters the vital processes, and becomes itself instinct with the life which descendeth from above. Truth is a matter of experience, that is, it is truth to us and for us, when the mind perceives its coincidences with the determinate laws of belief, and hears from its own depth a responsive voice, as of truth answering to truth. This state of mind characterizes every act of distinct intuition. Even abstract speculative knowledge is a consciousness, an experience that certain propositions are necessarily true; true, because they satisfy the

conditions of human belief, the end and consummation of all testimony and proof. Knowledge, then, is not a negative state, the mere absence of denial; but a positive, responsive, satisfied state, whatever may be the object of our knowledge.

Now we say that, according to the divine method, no progress can be expected in the absence of this answering consciousness to the truth, this inward experience of its adoption and power. It is not sufficient that I assent to the statement, that I am accountable, that I am a sinner, that I must be born again. Assent is not the knowledge required; it does not necessarily lead to it. My assent must rise to a state of consciousness, to a full, urgent, and irrepressible conviction; then will the soul recoil at its vileness; I shall tremble at the wrath which hangs over me; I shall groan in anguish of spirit, till the power of the highest overshadow me, and my heart receives the testimony that I am born of God. Here is inward experience, and here the conditions of progress in divine knowledge. Leaving the earthly, I can now ascend to the heavenly, and with joy draw water from the wells of salvation. I am now prepared to receive the higher, the life-giving, the soul-saving truth, "that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Aim then, O inquirer, at experience; strive, and cease not till you have drawn the full power of the divine doctrine into your heart, that you may go on from strength to strength in the knowledge of God and of his Son, whom to know is life eternal.

From the subject before us we are led,—

1. To infer the validity and legitimate scope of the *à priori* method as applied to theological inquiries. By

abjuring this method in theological investigations, we run the hazard of needlessly embarrassing such minds as are accustomed to admit its validity and accept its aid in all kindred fields of thought, while, on the other hand, it is certain that we shall confine knowledge within bounds too narrow for the necessities of our own minds. It is a misapprehension, we conceive, to suppose that à priori knowledge is independent of experience ; or that it is not in an important sense controlled and limited by it. "By knowledge à priori," to use the language of another, "we do not mean that we can know anything previously to experience, which would be an absurdity ; but that having once known it by occasion of experience, that is, something acting upon us from without, we then know it must have pre-existed, or the experience itself would have been impossible. By experience only I know that I have eyes, but then my reason convinces me that I must have had eyes in order to the experience."<sup>1</sup>

Matters of fact, the phenomenal of being, it is conceded, are all contained within the province of experience ; but truth, as underlying all phenomena and being, and constituting the ground on which the actual first became possible, is addressed to a higher intuition than what pertains to the sensuous or immediate consciousness. All human knowledge, indeed takes its rise in, or rather is suggested by, phenomena, of which revelation is only an instance ; nevertheless, the forms of thinking which are essential to the mind predetermine all our conceptions of such phenomena, and impress their own outline on all which the mind receives or produces. By excluding from theology the method to which we have adverted, we reduce it to a mere aggregation and

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, Marsh's edition, p. 397.

arrangement of facts, and ignore its claims to the stability and grandeur of a science. What is science that is not founded in fixed, universal and intelligible principles; and how are such principles evolved but by an organic power of mind, which though awakened by experience, nevertheless overleaps the limits of possible experience, the perception of the phenomenal, and calls around itself ideas of order, congruity, universality, and eternity? An event may occur in a man's life, or a word may fall on his ear from above, and with the sensuous perception the work of experience may terminate. But where experience ends, the process of a higher evolution may begin, and the idea of personality, of a responsible will, of a moral law, of a righteous judge, of guilt and vileness, and inexorable wrath, pass in solemn succession before him; and these thoughts come not from without, nor from above, but from the depths within; nay more, they bear the features of old acquaintanceship, the aspect of household things. Moreover, what is truth now is truth forever; and what is truth to me, is, or should be, truth to another, and to all. This I know, not from experience, but from that which transcends experience, and enables me to see the all in one, the past and the future in the present.

2. We are cautioned, in the light of our subject, not to disparage those aids to religious instruction and culture which are to be found in man's own bosom. To invoke the aid of reason, or to appeal to those sources of moral truth which are essential to a morally constituted being, is sometimes regarded as derogatory to revelation. The light of Scripture, it is conceived, becomes the more brilliant, and its teachings the more authoritative, as we succeed in extinguishing even the faint glimmerings that still linger in a fallen mind. But what is the main office of revelation, but first to call forth, and then to answer, the



questionings of the spirit within ? what, but to warm into vitality the germs of truth in the soul, to give birth to convictions as yet but feebly struggling for utterance, or of which the soul is but potentially conscious. Man, though sadly fallen, is none the less a personality, reflecting dimly, and as if from a tarnished and marred surface, the lineaments of the divine image, with his moral organism still entire, though diseased, enfeebled, and enslaved. There is still an oracle within which echoes to the oracle from above ; a light that flames forth responsive to the light of the word,—a voice of truth, still and small it may be, nevertheless to the ear of the soul distinct and awful in its utterances, which answers to the voice of the spirit. And were the soul of man less than this, or other than this, even in its most degraded state, it would be a thing and no man. Truth could not exist for it, nor it for the truth ; it would be a thing, not only without life, but incapable even of a resurrection. Thus did Paul the Apostle contemplate the capabilities of man, even when dead in trespasses and sins. He approached man as an inspired witness to man, not only of what God in his high sovereignty and grace had provided for him, but also of what was in man ; and he came believing that man could apprehend and appreciate his testimony, and that the same would “commend itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Jesus, in like manner, communed with Nicodemus on “earthly things,” and strove, as the first object of his mission, to awaken the power of self-reflection, and then to call up from the depth of the soul those in-born convictions, those insatiable yearnings, which could find their answering and sufficing counterpart only in “the heavenly.”

3. In imparting instruction to men, we are cautioned against confounding or inverting the order of divine

things. All truths sustain a determinate and, for the most part, an obvious relation to each other. There is order and sequence among them, at least, as they lie in the mind of the all-comprehending God—a beginning, middle, and end. This order and inter-dependence our Divine teacher recognized, in that he distinguished the earthly from the heavenly. And, moreover, he manifested his intention to conform to this method in his instructions to inquiring souls, in that he declined proceeding to the heavenly, or higher truths, till those that were nearer home, and of the first concern, had been received. Like a wise and skilful master, he begins not with the last results, but with the first principles : he lays bare the foundation rock, and then builds thereupon. In the bosoms of men he discovers a guiding and a needful light, and though it shines feebly and in a dark place, he pours oil upon it and cherishes it ; and then directs the inquirer to look steadfastly upon it, till his eye becomes single, and his whole body is full of light. He shows him the deep and deadly malady of his soul, as the only condition of making him understand the remedy provided, and as the only effective means of persuading him to apply to the great Physician. And what was wise in the example of Jesus, as a teacher, cannot be folly in those to whom the mode of reconciliation is committed. If the true method is to begin with the earthly to illustrate the doctrine of sin, and that the sinner “must be born again,” let us take heed, and not turn all things into confusion, and insure defeat to our purpose by inverting the true order and beginning at the heavenly.

4. We discover one reason, and perhaps the chief one, why the higher and less obvious truths of religion are so often rejected. It is similar to that which prevents the higher conclusions of natural science from

being received by the pupil who has not been led forward by regular and successive steps till he has arrived at those conclusions. These results, though they may stand in the class of necessary and eternal truths, are regarded by the unpractised mind either as unintelligible or palpably absurd. So we hear men of intelligence cavilling at the truths of religion, for no other reason but that they have not been led by a subjective, experimental method, along the path which guides the mind to a right apprehension of the things of God. The doctrine of an atonement, of predestination, of sovereign efficacious grace, of an Almighty Redeemer, of the future endless punishment of the wicked, and such like, are repelled from many a bosom, for the simple reason, perhaps, that they began their inquiries at the wrong place. Had they sought for the fountains of religious truth and sentiment in their own bosoms, where Jesus taught Nicodemus to find them, and taken for their first lesson the free and accountable nature of man; and, next, his sinfulness, deep, deadly, and uncontrolled, as their consciousness might have revealed it to them; and, lastly, had they listened to the testimony which the soul, in all its misgivings, and terrors, and yearnings, gives to the truth, "ye must be born again," think you they would have found much difficulty in regard to the truths which lie beyond? Just apprehensions of sin, as a native, malignant element in the moral nature of man, whose only adequate remedy is found in the prescription, "ye must be born again," prepares the mind for all the subsequent teachings of the Word and Spirit of God. Under the power of such apprehensions, it will recognize the justice of God in the final destruction of the impenitent; the propriety and necessity of imputation and an atonement as the condition of pardon and justification; the agency of electing love and efficacious grace

in "delivering the soul out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." It is because the mind is not intelligently grounded in first principles, that the great and prevailing errors on these points take their rise. And hence the common, if not uniform occurrence, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, that, when the commandment is brought home, and sin in its true malignity and desert revived in the consciousness of the soul, these errors are found to give place to "the truth as it is in Jesus."

5. We infer the inexcusableness of those who reject those first principles of religion, on the admission of which a new and divine life is conditioned. These principles are what our Saviour denominates "earthly things;" they are neither derived from heaven above, nor from the depths beneath; they are nigh thee, O man, in thy mouth, and in thy heart. Hence, when our Lord would lead Nicodemus into the possession and enjoyment of the new life of God, he begins with an appeal to those truths which lie in every man's bosom, and which need only the aid of serious self-reflection to bring them forth into full and fearful consciousness. "Ye must be born again," was the truth which needed to be revived in the mind, as the condition of attaining to that life of God which is everlasting. Nothing could be done till this sentiment had a conscious place in the soul. While this was absent, or hidden from the eye of the mind, no progress could be expected towards the comprehension of higher truths. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"

And if the first principles of religion, those without which all others are unavailing to salvation, are to be found in man's own bosom; and if here, in our own souls, powers may be awakened, which, under those aids

which the Holy Spirit is most ready to supply, will lead on, step by step, to peace with God and everlasting life, then, what excuse will remain for him who lives and dies in ignorance and sin? Wilt thou say, fellow man, "I had no Bible to guide me?" the answer will be, "You needed none in order to begin the work whereunto you were called." Will it be your apology, "that you could not apprehend the things of the Spirit of God?" the reply will come back, "It was only the things of the spirit of man you were required to apprehend." Will you plead the impossibility of reconciling Scripture with reason, or even with itself?" it will be retorted upon you, "You were not required to do either; but simply to reconcile yourself to God." Your present duties, O man, all lie within a very narrow compass: "they are in thy mouth, and in thy heart." You are to commune with yourself seriously and earnestly, as Jesus instructed the anxious sinner before him to do, and light will speedily dawn upon your mind. Sin will revive, and the conviction fasten on your soul, that "you must be born again." Here is the point where you will need, and where you will crave a higher guidance. Here you will be taught to look to Him who was lifted up on the cross, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. What excuse, then, we ask again, will remain for the sinner who neglects even to explore the records of his own soul, and wilfully or carelessly declines the first step that leads to salvation? Truly has our Lord Jesus testified, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Lastly. The source is indicated whence is to come the revival and augmentation of that spiritual power of the pulpit over the public mind, with which the continued progress and final triumph of the church are intimately connected. Culture of a more liberal scope, and of a more uniform diffusion, in no previous age adorned the Christian pulpit. Never were the altars of the church throughout Christendom loaded with such wealth of learning and scholarship, or served by such cultivated taste and artistic power, as at present. And to this, doubtless, have our public schools of theology — aided, as we are inclined to think, by the riper and more generous discipline attainable in the schools below — essentially contributed. Nevertheless, I fear it must be conceded that the mind of Christendom shows far less signs of subjection to the control and influence of the pulpit than at almost any former period. Other instructors and guides to the people have risen up; and, moreover, the people themselves have attained to far more enlightenment and generous culture, and, indeed, have passed the line beyond which none but strong and practised minds, and men of resolute wills, can claim to lead them. The spiritual and secular powers never before met in conflict on so high an arena; and never were the tendencies of an age to good or evil so likely to be determined, so far as human agency is to be regarded, by the mere force and dexterity of mind. Tradition, authority, custom, prescription, notions, which once controlled the faith and exacted the homage of men, are become effete; and the question of questions, Whether the vital, everlasting truths of the Spirit of God, or the idols of the understanding, shall hold the world in obedience, is henceforth to be tried on its own intrinsic grounds. Mind, then, earnest, resolute, comprehensive,

practised mind, made powerful by its own deep and unfaltering convictions and the unction of that Word which cometh from above, is what the pulpit of this age and of future ages imperiously demands. Mind, like the body, is strengthened for the battle by that which it feeds on, — the deep things of God and man, which the spirit only can understand and interpret, — the mysteries of the soul, the mysteries of the kingdom of God. There must be deeper communings of the soul with itself, and more earnest listenings at the oracles of God; the life-giving and soul-awakening truths, which are to reclaim a lost world to God, must become in the preacher's own heart "the spirit and the power," before the pulpit will assert its high and true place among the guiding influences of earth. Until the preacher becomes the interpreter of the soul, as well as of the Word, and can commend himself to the conscience of every man, by testifying to what he himself feels within, the Word spoken will fail to become the wisdom and power of God unto salvation. And when mind comes into conflict with mind, the secular with the spiritual, enticed forward, on the one hand, by the notions and expedients and interests which things temporal suggest, and, on the other, stirred to its utmost depths of earnestness, and girt to its full strength by all that is grand and awful in the manifestation of things unseen and eternal, who can doubt on which side, the grace of God coöperating, the victory will incline? May all, then, who minister before the altar, be touched with the live coal that glows thereupon. May those present who have long borne the heat and toil of the ministry, and those who are now girding the harness to their loins, give the most earnest heed to the injunction of the aged apostle: "Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all."

## SERMON IV.

### MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO ME AGAIN, SAYING: WHAT MEAN YE, THAT YE USE THIS PROVERB CONCERNING THE LAND OF ISRAEL; SAYING, THE FATHERS HAVE EATEN SOUR GRAPES, AND THE CHILDREN'S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE? AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD, YE SHALL NOT HAVE OCCASION ANY MORE TO USE THIS PROVERB IN ISRAEL. BEHOLD, ALL SOULS ARE MINE; AS THE SOUL OF THE FATHER, SO ALSO THE SOUL OF THE SON IS MINE: THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE." — *Ezekiel* xviii. 1—4.

THE Prophet Ezekiel was among the captives in Babylon, and his writings, whether prophetic or admonitory, were composed while in this state of exile. And here it is to be noticed, that while the scourges of the Almighty were laid upon his covenant people in consequence of their apostasy, they were not wholly deprived of their religious privileges. Although banished from the house of the Lord, and doomed to sojourn for a season, as captives in a strange and heathen land, they were still permitted to behold the face of their teachers, and listen to their instructions. Some of the most eminent and favored prophets of the Lord — such as Daniel, and Ezekiel, together with other holy and gifted men, accompanied their brethren in their exile, to instruct them and their children in the right ways of the Lord, and to console with them in their abject and miserable state. And it would seem that God so ordered it in his providence,



that these his servants should not be hindered in their work. After a short season, in which they were persecuted by their captors, the Jews seem to have enjoyed a state of religious freedom. They were permitted to worship their own God, and to be instructed and edified by their prophets. And, under the teachings of those men of God, they seem, in a good measure, to have been preserved from the temptations that beset them in a pagan land, nay more, to have been thoroughly reclaimed from the idolatry into which the mass of the people had sunk before the captivity, and even to have enjoyed a season of prosperity. Certainly, the captivity in a *moral* point of view, was to them a national blessing. They returned to their own land with a character far superior to that with which they left the country. They were a chastened and reformed people,—weaned from their idols, humbled for their sins, acquiescing in the severe chastisements they had received, and even cherishing kind and conciliatory feelings towards those who had oppressed them. Such were the fruits of those covenant corrections which they had borne, combined with the faithful admonitions and comforting assurances which they had all along received from their spiritual guides.

The chapter before us discloses the condition of the people when first overtaken by the judgment of God. It shows us a people exasperated and embittered under the calamities visited upon them ; with their moral principles perverted, and their hearts hardened into great boldness and obduracy against God, who remonstrated with them by the Prophets, who faithfully reminded them of their sins, and affectionately exhorted them to repentance as the only means of arresting his wrath, and bringing their sufferings to a close. They seem to have been excited into rage, and boldly attempted to excuse them-

selves, and to arraign the justice of God. "God," said they, "is punishing us for the sins of others." The proverb was in every man's mouth : "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." This sentiment which they had imbibed, had a two-fold influence,—it fortified them against repentance for their past sins, and hindered a reformation from the sins in which they were continuing to indulge. When the prophets assured them that their present sufferings were the just fruits of their apostasy from God, they said, "No; they are the consequences of the sins committed by our fathers." When warned by the prophets that still sorer judgments were in store for them, if they continued in disobedience and impenitence, they answered, "Our children must suffer the punishment of our sins, as we suffer the punishment due to the sins of our fathers." Thus did God receive fresh insults from the people whom he had been compelled to chastise, and thus were the exertions of his prophets to bring them to repentance baffled and rendered unavailing.

To silence these unreasonable and wicked gainsayings of his people, God sent forth his prophet Ezekiel with a special message, in which he exposes the falsehood and blasphemy of the people, and vindicates the equity of his dealings with them, and with all his creatures. And as it is natural for unhumbled man, in all ages of the world, to arraign the justice of God in the government of his creatures, and especially as it is not uncommon to hear sinners at this day repeat the old proverb of the Jews, in the way of excusing themselves and accusing God, it may be useful for us to examine the issue here formed between God and his people, and the principles which do now and ever guide him in the government of the world.

I. Let us consider the charge alleged against God, —

the principles imputed to him by the Jews in his government of his creatures. "What mean ye," asks God, "that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel; saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" The question was not asked because any one was in doubt, or could be in doubt, in regard to the import of the proverb. But the Jews are interrogated because God would in this way both deny the truth of this proverb, and also reprove them for the impious purposes for which they used it. The sentiment which they were understood to utter, and which they intended to utter, by this proverbial expression was, that God punishes the innocent in place of the guilty; that children, being innocent, expiate in their own sufferings the crimes and sins of their fathers. Hence, if their prophets, when laboring to bring them to repentance, reminded them that all those calamities which had been visited upon them were the just judgment of God in view of their sins, and, of course, were the evidence of their sinfulness, they took shelter from the reproof under this proverb: "God," said they, "does not punish the guilty for their own sins, but the innocent for the sins which others have committed. What we suffer is evidence, indeed, that our fathers have sinned, and that we are their children; it is proof of our miserable state under the divine government, but no evidence that we are personally guilty." Such were the strange and impious doctrines that were defended by the Jews, who, after a long season of forbearance on the part of God, — a season filled up by unavailing admonition entreaty and warning, — were at last overtaken and crushed by the pressure of his wrath.

This sentiment, so absurd and blasphemous, seems to have been entertained and boldly advocated, not by a few

extravagant and reckless leaders only, but by the mass of the people; and the whole of this chapter, and other portions of the book, are employed in debating this point between God and his unreasonable people. God vindicates himself from the allegation both by argument and by oath; averring by his great name that what they assert is without truth, and appealing to all his works in proof of its falsehood. Still, they returned to the charge, saying, "Why shall a man die for the iniquity which he himself doeth? Doth not the son bear the iniquity of his father?" Do you ask whence could the Jews derive a sentiment which reflects so great dishonor upon the character of God? We must answer, from the same fruitful source whence originate all the absurd doctrines, the impious and damnable errors, that now abound in the world,—the deep fountains of their own corrupt hearts. But may not a sentiment nearly akin to this, it may be asked again, be derived from the Word of God itself? It has been suggested by some that this proverb, with slight alteration, is to be found among the proverbs of Solomon (Proverbs x. 26): "As vinegar is to the teeth, and as smoke is to the eyes, so is iniquity to them that practise it." But surely the sentiment here taught is widely different from that conveyed by the proverb in our text. Solomon says that iniquity shall be to *them that practise it*, what vinegar is to the teeth; in other words, the punishment of sin shall be upon the sinner himself, and not upon some one else. Again, we are referred to the second commandment in the decalogue as containing the sentiment advocated by the Jews: "For I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my command-

ments." But, I would ask, is the principle which the Jews asserted influenced God in the government of his creatures to be found in this passage? Does God here enforce the prohibition of idolatry on the ground that our children, being innocent, shall bear the penalty of this our sin, even to the fourth generation? Does it not expressly promise that mercy, even to a thousand generations, shall be shown unto those who love God and keep his commandments, irrespective of the good or evil done by their parents?

Men may, indeed, participate, and justly participate, in the punishment deserved by their fathers, but it is because they participate in the sins of their fathers. The children of idolatrous fathers bear the punishment of their fathers, that is, a punishment like that of their fathers, because they too are, like their fathers, in idolatry. The curse of God goes down to the after generations of them that hate him, because these generations imbibe and cherish the same hatred of God which their fathers cherished before them. They bear the iniquity of their fathers in punishment, because they bear it in act and perpetration. In other words, they are punished in their own persons for their own sins, as their parents, whose example they have copied, are punished in their own persons for their personal sins. And what is there in this principle which reflects on the justice of God, or that gives the least countenance to the impious sentiment of the Jews, that children, being themselves innocent, are punished for the sins of their fathers?

II. Let us inquire into the true principle by which God is influenced in the government of his creatures, and on which he places his defence against all accusations. And here you will notice the indignation and abhorrence with which God regards the sentiment im-

puted to him by his people. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb? Have you the hardihood to attempt the defence of a position so utterly false? Are you so lost to shame, as to utter such a blasphemy against your Creator? Having expressed his astonishment at the audacity of his calumniators, the most High proceeds: "As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel." This language is not to be interpreted into an admission that there ever had been just occasion for the use of the proverb. It rather expresses God's determination effectually to silence his enemies on this point. If doubt and obscurity had rested on it hitherto, he would now remove all uncertainty from their minds, and set forth the truth and honor of his government in a light that would admit of no mistake. He does not propose any change in the principles which he has hitherto observed in his dealings with men, but to assert and vindicate those which he has always regarded, and would forever regard. No change was introduced at this time, in the principles of God's providential government; he continued to deal with his people just as he had ever dealt with them; so that if there ever had been just occasion to use this proverb cited in the text, that occasion continued and still existed. But if the absence of a clear demonstration on this point gave occasion for the proverb, that occasion should exist no longer. "Behold," he continues, "all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die." These words exhibit the principles by which the divine government is directed, and show that it has its foundations in the most perfect justice and equity. God does not say, simply, what shall be, as if something new were now to be introduced; but

he declares what is, and ever has been, the method of his dealings with men. This is evident from the fact, that he not only declares (to use the language of the courts) what the law is, but the reasons of the law. If then, a new law or principle was here to be introduced, it must be for the reason that some new relation has come into being between him and his people. But if no relation existed now save what had always existed, then the law and the principle growing out of that relation were not new, but had existed from the time in which that relation began. And what were the reasons of the law here laid down? Why does God say that no man, being innocent, shall die for the sin's of another, that each one shall suffer for his own sins? The reason asserted is, that "all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine."

And was not the doctrine as true in any previous age of the world, as it was in the days of Ezekiel? Is it not as true in regard to every portion of mankind as it is of the Jews? If then it is just and proper now that the soul that sinneth should die, because every soul is God's, then hath it always been just and proper that only such should die, because from the beginning God could say with as much truth as now "all souls are mine; as the soul of the fathers, so also the soul of the son is mine." I have the same power over the one as over the other; one is as dear to me as the other. There is no necessity that I should let the father escape, and wreak the vengeance due to his sins upon his tender children; the first is as entirely within my power as is the last. And as there is no necessity to compel, so there is no partiality to bias. The children hold as high a place in my heart as do their parents. Being innocent, I would sooner touch the apple of my eye, than touch them. To

punish the children for the sins of the parents, would be no less repugnant to my nature than to punish parents, being innocent, for the sins of their children. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is the principle that shall henceforth govern me, because it has hitherto governed me, in all my dealings with men. All souls are mine; and therefore the sinner, and the sinner only, shall bear the punishment of his sins.

This was the principle which Abraham, the friend of God, recognized in the divine government in his time. Standing near unto the Lord in the plain of Mamre, an earnest suppliant for the devoted cities of the plain, he says: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" The very question seems to his jealous heart, to savor of blasphemy, and he adds: "That be far from thee, that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the same essential principles of the divine government which Abraham recognized in his day, and which inspired him with confidence in God and submission to his will, are reasserted in the chapter before us, that the impiety of wicked men may be put to silence. "If a man be just and do that which is lawful and right, if he hath walked in my statutes and hath kept my judgments to deal truly, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." Again, "if the just man shall beget a son who is a robber, or shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, shall he then live? He shall not live; he hath done all these abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. Now, lo, if this last shall beget a son that seeth all his fathers sins which he has done, and considereth and doeth not such like, but executeth my judgments and walketh in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquities of his father; he shall



surely live. As for his father, lo, he shall die in his iniquity; — the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Such is the exposition which God gives of his government; yet, alas, it fails to satisfy unreasonable and wicked men. They still find fault with the Most High, and blaspheme. "Yet, saith the house of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore will I judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

From the preceding discussion, several inferences and reflections are suggested.

I. The government which God has instituted over man is a moral government. And by moral government we mean, that which is suited to beings capable of moral actions, which is conducted on moral principles, and is subservient to moral ends. Moral government is sometimes defined to be a government of motives; but what government over man is not a government of motives? And how, then, will this definition distinguish the divine from human governments, all of which are sustained by the influence of motives? No government over free agents, of course, can be sustained without an appeal to motives; and in this respect all governments are alike. But the government of God differs from all others, in the fact that it is conducted on moral principles, and seeks a moral end; while human governments proceed, to a great extent, on the principle of expediency, and with a view to a political end. A

moral government implies that its subjects are capable of moral action,—that they are beings free to choose their own course of action, and are responsible for the choice they make. Again, it implies a law of right, not of expediency, for the rule of life; a law unchangeable in its precepts, that is the same to all men, and that may be known to all. It implies, moreover, an end to be secured, corresponding with the spirit of its precepts, and altogether sufficient in magnitude to authorize the high and fearful sanctions, by which the law is guarded. And, finally, a moral government implies an almighty, all-wise, and just being to preside over it; a being, of whose own character the law itself is but a copy; who possesses unlimited and underived authority, and who is the rightful judge of all souls, because all souls are his.

This is the government under which man finds himself placed at the moment of his creation. It is not a condition of his own choice in which he finds himself, but it is the necessary condition that belongs to man. We no more choose to be the subjects of God's government than we choose to be created human. We can cease to be the subjects of this government only by ceasing to be human. Under this government the whole universe of rational beings stand in one common lot. We have the same rule to guide us; the same responsibilities to bear, each for himself; the same hopes to cheer us in the paths of holiness and virtue; the same penalties to deter from vice and sin; the same freedom of choice to determine our destiny for eternity. Under this government we are subjected to an uncompromising and most searching rule; for the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good; it searcheth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He who applies the rule, and to whom both the reward and

the vengeance belongs, is himself everywhere present to see all, and to know all that we do. With him darkness and night are both alike; his thoughts search the heart and try the reins of the children of men. And what anxious thoughts does this truth awaken in the mind! How solemn, how awful the condition in which we all exist! Who can survey it in all its length and breadth, and not be overwhelmed! Surely the thoughtful man will resolve "to walk softly before the Lord all the days of his life," remembering the gracious words of his lawgiver and judge, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

II. If the government of God is a moral government, we may rest assured that no injustice will befall its subjects. Human governments may so exercise the power entrusted to them as to pervert justice, and to inflict grievous wrongs; and this will happen, because such governments are constructed on principles of expediency, and are administered always by fallible, and oftentimes short-sighted, men.

But a strictly moral government is necessarily a perfect government;—perfect, both as it regards the rule which it enforces, and as regards the being who administers it. It is a government founded in moral equity, and limited by it. The law is holy, just, and good in all its precepts and prohibitions. Where obedience would cease to be holy, just, and good, there a moral government must terminate.

The moral law is founded in right, and is, of necessity, limited by it. And what is a moral government but the administration of the moral law? It enforces the whole law, and nothing but the law. If anything is exacted of the subject aside from the law, or above

the law, that ceases to be the exaction of a moral government.

Again, we have said that not only the law, but the administration, must be perfect. A moral government must have its source somewhere. It cannot proceed from its subjects, for its subjects were all created under it, and therefore could have no agency or choice in originating it. The conclusion, then, is unavoidable, that the moral law must be traced up to the divine mind as its proper source. From that uncreated origin it derives all its authority, and all its sanctions. And can that which is perfect in its very nature and essence be derived from an imperfect source? Can that which is universal, unlimited, and without change originate but in him, who is the uncreated and the uncontrolled, — of purer eyes than to behold sin, — a God of truth and without iniquity, — righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works? No injustice or wrong, then, we may be assured, can be perpetrated by a moral government. The object of that government is to prevent injustice. It is instituted to be “a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.” It receives all its subjects under its divine protection; it arrays the power and wrath of the Almighty against all who would wrong or oppress us; it holds forth the most ample and certain rewards to them that do well; it utters indignation and wrath only to them that do evil. It involves no one, being innocent, unless as incident to our present social condition, in the penal plagues that are visited upon transgressors.

Much less does it condemn the innocent in the place of the guilty. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” may be the confiding declaration of all the sons of men. “Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

III. If the government of God is a moral government, then transgressors may expect no mercy from it. The government of man is, to a great extent, a government of expedients. It is a yielding and flexible instrument, wearing, now the aspect of severity, and again of clemency; at one time punishing the guilty, and at another bidding them go in peace, and sin no more. But the government of God admits of no expedients. It looks only to the right; it deals only in judgments. Strictly speaking, mercy has no place in the government of God; it is throughout an instrument of justice. Its language is "he that is just shall surely live," "but the soul that sinneth it shall die."

The utterly hopeless condition of the sinner, then, viewed as a subject of the law, opens at once upon our minds. He stands at the tribunal of justice condemned; and whatever may be the penalty which he has incurred, the same must he expect to suffer. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The moral law is the mere instrument of justice, seeking to establish its empire among the creatures of God. The means of attaining its end are summary and uniform. Justice holds up the holy law of God in the sight of the universe, and says, "obey this law and live; disobey and die." She stands alone in the administration of the law. Mercy is not permitted to divide authority with her, or to reverse or modify one of her decisions!

What consolation, then, is offered to the soul that has sinned? Does he say, I regret my folly, and deplore my sins against God? Be it so; but how will this confession avail him? Does the law contain the word repentance? Does it name any condition on which his sentence may be reversed, and the offender released?

Does the sinner reform and promise to sin no more? Be it so; but of what avail is all this to him, as the

subject of a broken law? He has sinned; and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

And what the condition of the sinner is, the same is the condition of all men viewed in their relation to the law. For "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and hence, all are by nature (regarded as the subjects of the law) the children of wrath. The law which was ordained unto life is now found to be unto death. By the deeds of the law, yea, by means of the law, shall no flesh living be justified. Forlorn, then, is the hope which any of the sons of men repose in the law of God. To seek in it a refuge for our souls, is to fly for shelter to the devouring fire, to the everlasting burnings.

IV. We see the absolute necessity of another method of saving men, than the one revealed in the law. There must be a way provided by which God can justify those who have sinned, or there is no possible relief for the children of men. The law offers life and salvation to the just; but it proclaims indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul that doeth evil. On this side, then, the way is hedged up; accents of wrath greet our ears; darkness and death meet our eyes.

Some other method, then, of saving men must be provided, or we are lost, — all lost, — forever lost! And will the insulted, offended God provide such a method? Has he provided it? Is it a safe and sure one? Is it for each and for all? Yes, such a remedy is discovered, and it is for us, and for all. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

And now, fellow-sinners, you that have broken the holy law of God, and brought guilt and condemnation on your soul by this sin, will you sin again, and with a bolder heart, by rejecting the Lord that bought you, and thus expose yourself to that retribution from which nothing can save you? You must renounce the law as your hope and salvation, or you reject Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

There are two classes of men that hold to the law, the broken, the condemning law of God, for salvation, and thereby reject the hopes of the gospel. The one is the ancient Pharisee, and all who at this day resemble him. They trust to the merit of obedience, of such an obedience as the law requires, and therefore hope to live. But they reject the only name whereby we must be saved, and therefore they will perish. The other class is the Universalist, who trusts to the merit of suffering, vainly believing that he dies, every day and every hour that he sins, the death that is threatened; and having thus borne the penalty of the law, claims the same merit as if he had obeyed the whole law. Repentance, pardon, divine mercy, have no place in his system; he expects to be saved because he deserves it, and on no other ground. Such is the system of the modern Universalist, a system as hostile to the gospel, and as subversive of it, as is the religion of the Koran. He who embraces it appeals to the law and justice of God for salvation, and despising the righteousness which is of God by faith, treasures up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And, my hearers, trust ye to this system, and you will die in your sins: give up the law, as the law of life and salvation, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

## SERMON V.

### THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

“HE SAITH UNTO THEM, BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? AND SIMON PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.” — *Matthew* xvi. 15, 16.

#### I.

OUR Saviour propounded the question in the text, as a means of drawing from his disciples a declaration of their opinions in regard to himself and to his mission. Having now for a long period of time been admitted to constant and familiar intercourse with him; having enjoyed abundant opportunities to observe his manner of life in private, as well as in public; having listened to his doctrine, and seen his miracles, he would have them distinctly avow the impressions which had been made on their minds.

This avowal, however, he solicited, not for his own satisfaction, for he “needed not that any should testify to him of man; for he knew what was in man.” He sought it rather as a means of influencing the opinions of those who had far less opportunity of judging for themselves, and withal of fixing strongly and deeply in their own minds the great principle which was to serve as the basis of a progressive faith and a Christian life. For in all matters of a practical nature, it is found that



ideas of most essential importance may fail to assume a firm outline and completeness to the mind, through lack of the advantage of being clearly stated and avowed. Nothing like a positive, full, and unblinking statement of a truth, serves to make that truth satisfactory to the understanding, and to give it that power and cogency over the mind which of right belongs to it. And herein lies one of the obvious advantages of a confession of faith, and the ground on which such a confession may be justified, and on which the observance of the practice becomes obligatory. It is not only a powerful means of influencing the belief of others in regard to what is claimed to be true and of vital importance to every man; but also of rendering these truths distinct and abiding in our own minds, and to the end of subjecting the heart and life to their plastic and renovating power. Hence, the question propounded in the text is pertinent to every living man. It involves the great, central truth of Christianity, and the relation of the human soul to that truth. Who is Jesus? In what respects is he distinguishable from the race of beings to which he seems to belong? For what purpose came he into the world and dwelt among men? What has he taught, and what has he done, to give him a preëminence over all the benefactors of men? Are questions on which it behooves every man to form an opinion according to truth. And that this opinion may not be vague or uncertain, or powerless as a means of spiritual culture and of endless life, it ought to be clearly stated in a form of words, and openly subscribed or otherwise avowed.

Contemplating his disciples as individual men who had a personal and eternal interest to be secured through him and the gospel he dispensed, or contemplating

them as the future missionaries of the cause of salvation to a world lying in wickedness, Jesus sought, in the first place, to have them understand clearly their own estimate of him and of his mission, and then to secure to them and to others the full benefit of a distinct avowal of the same. To accomplish this object he began by asking them, "Whom do men say that I the son of man am?" And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Having, in this way, indicated the great practical importance to be attached to the subject to which he had called their attention, and prepared their minds for a thoughtful consideration of it, he turns the question directly upon them. "But whom say ye that I am." Peter, who doubtless well understood the minds of his associates, and who was foremost either to speak or to act on all sudden emergencies, promptly replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was no vulgar honor which the people designed for Jesus, when they placed him in the ranks of the venerated Prophets of former ages, who were admitted to the counsels of the Most High, and were empowered to communicate his thoughts to men; but even this honor was not commensurate with the idea that had taken possession of the minds of the disciples. There was a Personage well known in the church of their fathers, from the earliest times, denominated "the angel of the Lord;" "the angel of the covenant;" "the Shiloh;" "Prince of peace;" "the Father of the everlasting age;" the "desire of all nations," of whom Abraham and Moses, and Daniel, and all the prophets bore witness, and to whom, they all ministered; "the Sun of righteousness," who in the latter days should rise upon the world with healing in his beams, and to whose light

the Gentiles should come; and this glorious Personage it is, whom the adoring disciples recognized, when they exclaimed through their accredited speaker, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And it is noticeable, that when Jesus heard this exalted confession from the lips of his disciples, so far from rejecting the unqualified honor implied, or reproving them for any idolatry which might seem to lurk under the phrase employed, or cautioning them against the use of unguarded expressions, he unreservedly commends their faith in the "great mystery of godliness," and extols the grace which had enabled them thus to understand and believe the scriptures concerning himself. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou Simon, Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

But we proceed to a more particular consideration of the statement in the text, with a view to determine its import, and the influence which a belief in the scripture doctrine of a Christ is fitted to exert upon the character and pursuits of men. This word then, let it be remembered, is not used, primarily, as the name of a particular person, but to denote an office, agency, or constituted medium, through which, to bestow benefits on the needy. Christ is a word of Greek derivation, which like its Hebrew synonym, Messiah, denotes one acting under an authority or power commissioned to him. It conveys an allusion to the anointing oil, by which, men in ancient times were invested with the regal or sacerdotal office, and by which, the powers, dignity, and duties of these high stations were symbolized. The application of the oil, after a prescribed form and ceremony, and by a person duly authorized for the purpose, was the evi-

dence known and accredited of all men, that he who had received it, was solemnly invested with the authority and trust which belonged to the station designated. The generic idea conveyed by the term Christ or Messiah, is that of benefaction, and benefaction through the voluntary agency of a third person. And, regarded in this light, it is manifest that the Christ-hood of the Son of God introduces no new principle in the divine method of dealing with men. The principle of mediation is found to pervade the system which God administers in the government of the world. All men, and all communities of men, are subject to the general law of mediation, and each in his turn becomes the receiver and the distributor of the blessings of a bountiful Providence. It is, as if the Most High would not monopolize to himself the praise of being the sole benefactor of a race, but is pleased to exalt to the rank and honor of co-workers the souls whom he chooses to bless, and thereby stretches through the family of earth, and from the birth of time to its consummation, a cord of sympathy and gratitude suited to bind all hearts into a holy and loving brotherhood. One generation receives its inheritance of laws and custom, of art and literature and science, of domestic and social institutions, through the mediation of those who have gone before them ; and in their turn become the mediators of the same or richer benefits to those who come after them. Gifted men, scattered along the history of the world, become the mediators of blessings to the time in which they live, by the civil institutions which they have founded, by the freedom which they have established, the literature they have created, or the arts they have invented. These are the heroes of elder times, the founders of commonwealths, men of far-seeing sagacity and of large hearts,

whom the world loves to honor, and who secure their reward in the gratitude with which the memory of their names and deeds is cherished. The parent who nourishes the helpless infant which a careful Providence has laid in her arms, becomes its guide and guardian through the perilous years of childhood and youth, and nurtures it to all manly or womanly virtues, is a mediator of blessings for this life and for that which is to come ; while she receives a like office in return, through the love and veneration of her offspring, and through the hopes she cherishes for what is most dear to her in a higher and more blessed state of being. In short, how few and meagre are the privileges and benefits which distinguish our present state that are not mediate, showing that a principle of mediatorship — of a Christ-hood — is not the peculiar feature of a gospel dispensation, but the common, universal method by which God bestows ordinary benefits on the evil and on the good. And, indeed, so suited is this provision of infinite wisdom to the constitution of man, and so needful for the exercise and culture of his noblest endowments, that we see not how, on a different principle, the bands of brotherhood could be preserved among men, or how a sphere of benevolent action could be provided for us, or society, with its virtues and ornaments, be known on the earth.

But again, in the principle of mediation, which is so universally operative under the present divine constitution for men, there is developed another feature, which brings it into still closer resemblance to the Christ-hood of the Son of God. Man is not only the happy instrument of bestowing benefits on a fellow man, and, like the Father of all mercies, most blessed in the charity he dispenses, but he, moreover, takes upon himself the burdens of another, and submits to want and suffering

that he may mitigate the distresses of another. There is a substitution of one in the place of another, a vicarious provision, by means of which the system of penalties is mitigated to the guilty, by being transferred in part to the innocent. Nations that have lost their liberty, and are reduced to a state of abasement and oppression, are relieved and restored to their former prosperous condition at the price of the suffering and blood of the virtuous patriots. The parent participates in the penal consequences of the vices of his offspring, and the child inherits the poverty and shame consequent on parental improvidence and crime. And not only is there a distribution of the evil in such cases, but the guilty are not unfrequently relieved in proportion to the weight of burden imposed on the innocent. The poverty, disease, and wretchedness incident to a course of improvidence and guilty excess are mitigated by the humane provisions of hospitals, alms-houses and retreats, which are the product of the toil and self-denial of the virtuous. Here, then, is the vicarious principle super-added to the mediate; the innocent, in the place of the guilty, bearing pains and penalties due to another, and at least mitigating a punishment which otherwise would crush the victim of retributive justice. And all this appears to be, not accidental and of rare occurrence, but of every-day experience, and manifestly an organic principle in the divine economy in relation to a depraved race.

These considerations serve to illustrate the general notion of a Christ-hood, and especially to show that, as a method of imparting relief to the needy and guilty, it is not original in the Christian scriptures, or peculiar to them. Since man was created the principle of mediation has had scope in the world, and since he became a

fallen being this mediation has taken on a vicarious nature, in the sense that sin becomes imputative, and that its punishment is abated to the transgressor in consequence of the sufferings and sacrifices of another. The gospel dispensation is but the counterpart, in principle, of what has been witnessed the world over, and through all time, and the wisdom and equity of it is justified by all analogies derived from the constitution of the natural world. That a Christ should be appointed for the redemption of the world we can as easily believe as that the condition and happiness of men should be placed within the power of a fellow man; and that this Christ should bear the sins of many may as well be believed as that the innocent among men should be allowed to share in the penalty of the guilty, and so the sufferings of the transgressor, not indeed be cancelled, but greatly abated.

But the Christ-hood to which Jesus was called, as all must concede, is of a high and eminent import. It is an office which, though incorporating a principle of ordinary life, is still of extraordinary difficulty and importance in its consummation. It proposes not a relief, but a remedy; it is a contrivance for bringing in an everlasting and complete righteousness for all that believe. It not only provides for the mitigation of a present penalty, but even renders it just for God to justify the ungodly. It is not, then, the operating principle which distinguishes the Christ-hood of the gospel from all other instances of mediatorship known among men, but the dignity of the agent employed, the difficulties to be surmounted, and the entireness and completeness of the end contemplated.

To understand, then, in what sense and to what extent the Son of God is a Christ for men, we are to inquire

into the wants of men, as revealed in the common consciousness of the race, and what the gospel proposes to accomplish for men through the Christ which is there offered for our belief. We are not to reject the Christ because the idea of mediation, or imputation, or vicarious sacrifice is involved in it, or on the assumption that repentance is a sufficient remedy for all the penal evils to which the transgressor is liable. For this would be departing from all the analogies that meet us under the natural government of God. Here we find that repentance alone does not make an exemption from the penal consequences of sin; and, furthermore, we find that the blessings of Providence are distributed through the agency of men, and not uncommonly that the natural punishment of transgressions are, in a sense, transferred to the innocent, and expiated by them. We come, then, to a just and adequate idea of a Christ in the gospel sense, and indeed the highest human sense, only by conceiving of the relations of man to the law and the government of God. The true doctrine of a Christ is that of a mediatorship, in which not only are benefits bestowed, but benefits upon the guilty, and through the expedient of vicarious suffering. Not only are the needy to be relieved, but the guilty to be pardoned, and the offended and the offender reconciled. It is an expedient by which the justice of God may be vindicated in the justification of those who believe. The doctrine of a Christ, then, can have no intelligible foundation but in the conceded truth, that man is a sinful being, and held liable to a penalty which is commensurate with the value of the divine law to the universe. In the absence of such an admission no adequate idea of a Christ could enter the mind; for there is no proper occasion for a Christ, except when law and



the well-being of its subjects are in conflict. If the law forego its claims on the transgressor, or if the sinner have in himself wherewith to satisfy the law, then is every man his own Christ.

Such is the doctrine which the apostle clearly states in his epistle to the Romans, and to which all who believe in a Christ of God must yield their assent. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that God may be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

The obvious design, then, of the word Christ was to suggest to the mind the idea of a mediatorship, by means of which conflicting parties might be brought together, and an offended God reconciled to offending man. Hence, the person who sustains this office is described by the apostle as one "in whom God is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses." The necessity for such an office all men feel who believe in the obligation of God's law upon them, and reflect that they stand in the relation of sinners to that law, and thus far are liable to its penalty. They perceive that a broken law has but one method of asserting its authority,—that of inflicting, without mercy, the punishment due to the transgressor; and hence they are led to inquire for a Christ, a remedy for their miserable, helpless state, and are prepared to welcome, with joy inexpressible, the tidings that Jesus, the Christ of God, has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

But we are to consider, moreover, that in the general idea of mediatorship, denoted by the word Christ, certain

essential things are included that need to be distinctly apprehended and fully appreciated by the mind.

But no adequate idea of a Christ can exist that does not include a supreme authority to teach and guide.

It is one of the evils of our fallen state, that the channels of intercourse between our minds and God, the fountain of knowledge, are cut off, and we are left to grope our way in darkness. "The world by wisdom knew not God," is the account given of the most enlightened portion of our race when abandoned of God to the simple teachings of nature and reason. Now, the Christ that we need, and without which it is impossible to conceive how he should be a Christ to us, is one who shall restore to us those lessons of heavenly truth which had become lost to the world. We must know God, or how shall we love and fear Him? We must be made to understand ourselves, and learn our guilty and miserable state as sinners, and, by the hand of a trusty guide, be led into the paths of virtue and obedience; and for all this we must depend on the Christ of God. A Christ that was not a light to them that sit in darkness, — a guide to those who had gone astray, — yea, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, would be a hopeless remedy for the case of beings like ourselves. Hence, the Christ of the gospel was announced as a teacher come from God; and the first acts recorded of his ministry, were those of teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. In the next place, the idea of an atonement, of a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, enters into the true doctrine of a Christ. How shall he reconcile us to God, except by propitiating, in his own person and by his own sufferings, the favor of God towards the offender? How can we become the righteousness of God in him, unless he be made *sin* for us? How can

he redeem us from the curse of the law, but by being made a curse for us? A Christ without a priesthood in which, by the sacrifice of himself, he might put away sin and effect our propitiation, is not the Christ that we need.

Once more, the true doctrine of a Christ embraces the idea of kingly authority. The Saviour of the world must be its Lord and sovereign,—promulgating, with high authority, a law of righteousness for the obedience of revolted men, as the alone condition on which he can present them unto God, even the Father, without blemish and without spot. Hence, the Christ of God is set forth as King in Zion, the head of all principalities and powers, at whose name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. This is the Christ whom sinners need,—the Christ whom the ancient prophets foretold,—and whose advent was announced in the songs of the heavenly host, when they proclaimed peace on earth and good-will to men.

- This is the Christ whom the disciple recognized in Jesus of Nazareth, and to whom the lost sinner, impelled by his own fears and necessities, and guided by the word of God, commits his soul to be justified and saved. This is the being who, by virtue of his Christ-hood, is become Prince and Saviour,—the Lord of life,—the Captain of salvation, and to whom all who labor and are heavy laden may come, and find rest to their souls.

## II.

WE have seen that the word Christ is used in the text, not simply as a proper name, but for the purpose

of designating an *office* or agency. When the human mind is led to consider its relations to a moral law, and to reflect that these relations have all been neglected or violated; that sin has entered the heart, and with it, "death and all our woe;" that the guilty soul now lies helpless and forsaken, exposed to a dreadful penalty for its sins; the question at once arises, Is there no remedy? Is there no power out of myself, on earth or in heaven, that has pity on my soul, and can bring relief to its necessities? Can there be no expedient devised by which the authority of the divine law may be sustained, while the sinner, like myself, may be permitted to go unpunished? Can there be no provision made by which, while the honor of divine justice is left inviolate, mercy may be permitted to go forth to reclaim the guilty and save the lost? Can there not be a mediatorship instituted, in which the offender and the offended may be brought together and reconciled? These are the inquiries that naturally arise in the mind when awakened to a sense of its guilt and danger in transgressing the holy laws of God; and these inquiries are but the development of the idea of a Christ, which has taken possession of the mind. Christ is the remedy, whatever it may be, for the necessities of the sinner. The need of such a remedy is felt by all on whom the curse of a broken law has fallen: the assurance that such a remedy exists can be given only by Him who has the right and the power to provide it. The Christ of God is the mediatorship appointed by Him, through which he may be just and the justifier of them that believe. It is that provision of divine love and mercy by which the law is magnified, while the sinner is justified freely by the grace of God; a glorious expedient, devised by Infinite wisdom and

knowledge, and in which the several agencies of prophet, priest, and king are combined, and made subservient to the reconciliation of sinners to God. Such was the remedy which guilty man needed; and this remedy the disciples believed they had found in Jesus of Nazareth. Hence their united confession, — “Thou art the Christ;” in thee we have discovered what our needy, dying souls have long desired to find, — the Messiah promised to our fathers; the hope and consolation of Israel; the desire of all nations; the Christ of God. But we proceed, as was proposed,

II. To consider the declaration, that this Christ is the Son of God. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” These last words are subjoined to set forth more fully the exalted views which the disciples entertained of the dignity and glory of their master. It was not enough to say, “Thou art the Christ;” it was necessary, in order to satisfy their minds, to add to this, that in their apprehension, *he* was the Christ *because* he was the Son of the living God. The Christ-hood was an office of too much dignity, and its duties too mighty and responsible, to be sustained by any being inferior to the Son of the Most High God. But it is said the title, “Son of God,” is only an expression of endearment, or significant, merely, of the high and supernatural mission on which the man Jesus was employed; or, at least, but a symbolical pledge that divine protection and assistance should be vouchsafed him. But if it is in this humble sense only that the title, “Son of God,” is applied to Jesus in the Gospels, then why should it give such offence as it did to the Jews? “For a good work,” say they, “we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

Jesus answered them: "Say ye of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?'" This shows clearly in what sense the phrase, "Son of God," was generally understood among the Jews. It was equivalent to making the being to whom it was applied equal with God; and, of course, to apply it to a mere man was, in their apprehension, an act of pre-eminent blasphemy, rendering the person who thus used or assumed it worthy of death. In this sense, then, it is natural to suppose the disciples used the phrase in our text, "Son of the living God." They understood these words as their countrymen generally understood them; and they applied them to Jesus in the sense of attributing to him a divine nature and essence. And why should it surprise us to hear him accosted with such titles, and titles understood in the highest sense which they can bear? Is it not in terms of even less doubtful import that he is spoken of, in numerous passages of inspired writing, and set forth as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father? Who can hear him say, "I and my Father are one," and not believe that the Jews were justified in taking up stones to stone him, if he were but a mere man? Who can listen to his sublime language at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life," and not feel that it is the voice of the Son of God,—the supreme Divinity that he hears? Who can read the opening verses of St. John's gospel, and ever after feel surprised at any titles of dignity and honor that should be put on the Lord's anointed? "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and

without him was not anything made that was made; in him was life, and the life was the light of men." "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We conclude, then, that the language employed in the text is to be understood in its most obvious import; that by it the disciples meant to assert the divinity of the person who appeared as the Christ of God.

With this conclusion before our minds, a few reflections naturally suggest themselves, which are deserving of our most serious consideration.

1. That the scheme of reconciliation revealed in the gospel is characterized by admirable wisdom and propriety. It accords with the dictates of common reason to suppose that, in all cases, the umpire or mediator should sustain a similar relation to both the parties which he seeks to reconcile. In all cases of controversy between man and man, and so, too, between one nation and another, respect is always had to this circumstance. It is not enough that a man is capable and honest to fit him to negotiate as a mediator; he must be either indifferent to both parties in his personal feelings, or he must be alike favorable to both. Now, a controversy of the most serious character is pending between the mighty Ruler of the universe and the children of men. It is proposed on the part of Him, to whom in justice the lives of the guilty are forfeited, to attempt a reconciliation with His offending subjects through the intervention of an umpire or advocate. Now, what standing and dignity shall the proposed mediator be required to possess? In this respect, the parties at variance are infinitely removed from each other. The one is the

self-existent, eternal God, the Ruler and Proprietor of all worlds; the other is a being of yesterday; a tenant of the earth; a frail, helpless, and dying creature. It is fitting, as all must perceive, that the dignity and majesty of the everlasting God should be worthily represented in the proposed mediator; and no less desirable is it, if the thing is possible, that the creature of earth, oppressed with fears and miseries, should be able to discern in the same mediator, one of his own kindred who had struggled with the same temptations that assault him, and who could be touched with the feeling of his infirmities. But such a mediator, precisely — if you understand my text as I do — such a mediator has the wisdom and love of God provided to stand between Him and His revolted subjects, — a being who sustains to all sinners a relation as near and as endearing as he sustains to an offended God, — a being who, in the language of Job, is fitted by his twofold nature “to lay his hands upon us both.” If, on the one hand, he appears as the eternal Word, dwelling with God from everlasting, and jealous of the honor of the Godhead with whose fulness he is evermore filled; on the other hand, he comes to us as the word made flesh, and is not ashamed to call us brethren. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, he is found in fashion as a man; he is clothed with all the infirmities of our nature; exposed to all the temptations of the world and of Satan; himself a man of sorrows, and exercised in all the sympathies that we need, so that he may become a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, making reconciliation for the sin of the people. Behold, then, all ye who feel the wants and woes of a guilty spirit, — behold the Christ that is provided for you; behold him, the Son



of God, and yet the son of man, and admire the adorable wisdom and love of God which has so mercifully suited the remedy to your case!

2. Another reflection suggested by the text is, that sin must be an evil of incalculable magnitude. Familiarity with sin, in the way of committing, if not of beholding it, impairs the sensibility of the mind to its turpitude, and prepares us in time to regard it as a light evil. Crimes which at first shock the sensibilities of our minds, when they come to be frequent in community, lose much of their original odiousness. Hence, it comes that men entertain such low views of the enormity of sin, and that fools make a mock at it. But the great God, who knows the nature and essence of all things, and apprehends clearly the relations, tendencies, and results of all moral actions, cannot misjudge in regard to the evil and demerit of sin. And how great the evil of it in His eyes may be reasonably inferred from the measures He has taken to do it away. It would be an obvious presumption against the benevolence of God to suppose that He would be prodigal of suffering, or that He would require in a way of humiliation and sacrifice what was unnecessary fully to expiate the evil of sin. Hence, if we can ascertain in what the atonement consists,—what being was required to constitute the sacrifice, and through what agonies of body and spirit the expiation was wrought out,—then we may conclude that nothing short of this was an adequate remedy for sin; and hence, that this is a fair expression of its magnitude as a moral evil. Now, though we may not be able to express in language the sufferings of our mediator as an atonement for sin; though we cannot fathom the horrors of his soul when he sank to the earth in

prayers and tears and bloody sweat in the garden, or when he cried out on the cross, in agonies more terrible than those of death,—“My God, why hast Thou forsaken me,”—we still have one test by which the magnitude of sin may be determined. We know that no ordinary being was competent to expiate it by any sufferings he might endure, because no ordinary being was employed for this purpose. Murder we judge to be a great crime under our laws, because a great punishment is required to expiate it. What then must be the demerit of sin, which could have no forgiveness till the “Son of the living God” appeared to take it away by the shedding of his own blood? In the works of God there is a just proportion observed between the end and its means. How incalculably great, then, must the end be, to which the Son of the Most High God stands related as the only adequate means? Think of this, O man, if you would know how dreadful a crime it is to disobey the holy will of God!

One more reflection, suggested by the text, which I shall notice, is, that the remedy revealed in the gospel for sinners is adequate to the necessities of all mankind. The Christ is a Christ for all. All alike need him; all alike may find him; and whoever cometh to him, shall in no wise be cast out. The remedy revealed, is a remedy for the race; and of its adequacy to meet the necessities of all we have a pledge in the assurance that he who is chosen of God to be the Christ is himself the Son of the living God. Let no one, then, despair, for the Captain of our salvation is able to do all that we need; he can save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. And let no one be discouraged because the favor which he needs is in the hands of him who is

the judge of the quick and dead for dispensation ; for remember, that he is also bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Having, therefore, such a Christ, who by his own blood has obtained eternal redemption for us, let us have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us.

## SERMON VI.

### THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

“O THOU THAT ART NAMED THE HOUSE OF JACOB, IS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD STRAITENED? ARE THESE HIS DOINGS? DO NOT MY WORDS DO GOOD TO HIM THAT WALKETH UPRIGHTLY?”—*Micah* ii. 7.1

THE reason for such close and pointed interrogations addressed to the house of Jacob is to be found in the preceding verse. The people had become dissatisfied with the teachers whom God had set over them,—their manner and ways were unsuited to their tastes, or their doctrines failed to flatter their pride or to soothe and comfort their hearts; and, hence, they endeavored to arrest these holy men in their work, and to procure more acceptable teachers in their stead.

“Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy; they shall not prophecy to them, that they shall not take shame.” As if they had said, “Away with these men who will not stoop to consult the tastes and occasions of their hearers, but with sad and unwelcome tidings continually molest the ears of the people, and put them to confusion, and give us those who will “preach unto

<sup>1</sup> 1849. [The reader will find in this discourse Dr. Smith’s testimony to the value of the regular ordinances of the gospel, and a fuller exposition of the principles that influenced him in his treatment of Mr. Burchard and his friends. See *Memoir*, p. 20.—C.]

us smooth things." "They will not say," observes Matthew Henry, "Let us have no ministers at all; but they will have such as will say just what they will have them, and go their way."

For this unbecoming treatment of His servants—the true and rightful shepherds of His flock—the Most High expostulates with His people in our text, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob!" You boast of your relation to this eminent patriarch, the man who had power over the angel and prevailed,—from whom sprang a mighty nation,—the father of an illustrious line of priests and prophets. Now, then, let me ask you, ye descendants of these holy ancestors, ye heirs of the promises made of God unto your fathers, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Do you hope that by silencing the Lord's prophets you will baffle the designs of his Spirit also? Will men of your pretensions presume to dictate to my Spirit how, and by whom, he shall speak to the children of men? Will you take it upon yourselves to annul his high appointments; to break up the order of his house; or even to judge whether his work could not be better done in some other way, or by some other instruments?

"Are these his doings?" Did your honored father Jacob ever set before you an example of such arrogance? Did he ever intimate that the Spirit's chosen way of doing his work was not the best way? or that he was embarrassed, or that his power was straitened, or that his glory was obscured by adhering to his own mode of accomplishing God's gracious intentions concerning the children of men?

"Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" The words of the Spirit by his appointed, faithful servants are the words of God; and these words

are "with power" to all whose hearts are open to receive them. His chosen way of doing good to men is not only a good way, but the way for doing the most good with the least evil. His appointed methods, instead of limiting and straitening his operations, impart to them their highest freedom and their widest scope; instead of circumscribing his powers, they secure to it its greatest and safest effect. This is the experience of the saints. They know that my words do good and only good, yea, and the greatest good, to him that walks uprightly. They know that the Holy Spirit is not embarrassed, either by the truths he sends to men, or by the ordinary methods he has chosen by which to communicate these truths. Foolish and short-sighted men may imagine that his plan may be improved; that some unwelcome truths which he employs may be thrown into the shade; or that some instruments whom he has honored may be supplanted by those whom the people delight to honor; or that ways and means which, as it should seem, the Spirit never contemplated may with great advantage be engrafted on his system. But these suggestions have no weight with God. He still declares that His system is the best; it commends itself to all the upright, because it does their hearts good; it satisfies the Holy Spirit, because it gives free scope to his almighty power, and supplies the means of doing all the good He has to do, and of doing it with the greatest honor to Himself, and with the least evil to the world and to the Church.

With these explanatory remarks, I proceed to call your attention to the principal question moved in the text,—"Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

None of my hearers, I trust, will be at a loss to determine who the Spirit of the Lord is. He is the Spirit

of the prophets,—the Spirit of truth and holiness who qualified the ancient seers for their mission, and instructed them what, and in what manner, they should speak to men. For the “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” It is the same Spirit that was given to Jesus “without measure;” that descended upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, when they were all baptized into the Holy Ghost; that filled the apostles, inditing all that they spoke and wrote for the instruction of men, and that dwells in all them that believe. It is the Spirit that reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that fell upon Cornelius and all that were with him in his house; that opened the heart of Lydia and of all those who in apostolic times, “received power to become the sons of God,” — “to attend to the things that were spoken;” the same Spirit that in every succeeding age has been shed forth from on high, and, by the working of his mighty power, turned to God each and every soul “that was ordained to eternal life.”

Now, concerning this gracious and wonder-working agent, the question is raised in the text, — “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?—are these his works?” Has he undertaken what he cannot accomplish? Does he work by a plan and method that embarrasses or circumscribes his power? Will he be defeated in any part of his great design, or, in short, find any great difficulty in accomplishing all that has been assigned to him in the covenant of redemption, and in bringing home to glory every soul that has been given to Christ?

The subject here presented will lead me to consider the two following inquiries, to which I would invite your candid and serious attention, to wit: In what sense may the Spirit of the Lord be straitened? And in what sense is he *not* straitened?

I. In what sense may the Spirit of the Lord be straitened?

On this question, I remark:—

1. That his work on the hearts of men is limited to the purposes of God. The Holy Spirit was given unto man to accomplish a specific and determinate end. He was not sent hither to accomplish every conceivable kind of good, or even the greatest conceivable amount of good. When the Most High determined to create a world, he formed in his mind a conception of what sort of a world he would build,—of what form, of what dimensions, and of what materials it should be constructed. So, too, when he conceived the glorious design of creating a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness should dwell, he sketched in his own mind a pattern of the stupendous edifice. He determined its size and its proportions, and selected each of the “lively stones” with which it should be constructed, and each of the ornaments with which the holy temple should be adorned. Like a wise architect, he began his work with his whole plan before him. The part assigned to the Holy Spirit was to build these heavens and this earth, and to build them “according to the pattern of heavenly things,”—according to the model devised in the secret counsels of heaven. This he undertook to do; and he undertook nothing more. His work was limited to his plan, and when this was executed his mission to earth was finished. The plan of salvation limited his power to sanctify and to save, just in the same sense that it limits the prerogatives of Christ as an intercessor. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” To this point only did the power of the Spirit extend in the plan of God. “As thou hast given him power over all flesh,



that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." "The purpose of God according to election," must stand. Those "who from the beginning were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," must be brought in. They who are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son," must be called; the called must be justified; and the justified, glorified; and then the work of the Spirit is finished; and the Church of God, glorious as the Bride of heaven, and swelled to a multitude which no man can number, is presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

2. The Spirit is confined in his operations to this world and to the limits of time. The human family is not the only race of accountable beings that has broken its allegiance to God, and now lies in ruin before Him. The Bible speaks of other beings in like condemnation with ourselves; spirits of a higher order, and of loftier eminence among the creatures of God,—spirits that shone like the morning star in the firmament of angels, who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

Now, the Holy Spirit has no mission to these fallen spirits,—no work of mercy for their benefit is committed to his hands. God's plan of salvation did not embrace this race of beings; no part of them appears to have been given to Christ, or included in the propitiation he made for our sins; and hence we discover no provision for the sanctifying work of the Spirit on their hearts.

Again, as his work is limited to the inhabitants of this world, so, too, it is circumscribed by the boundaries of time. The work of Christ influences the destinies of men in eternity only as it influences their characters in

this life. Hence, the remarkable and solemn words which, on different occasions, fell from his lips. "A little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me, and ye shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come." "Many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." And what language can affirm the truth more strongly, that death terminates the hope of the sinner; that beyond this period no provision exists for the salvation of those who have hitherto remained in unbelief! Henceforth, the offers of mercy are outlawed; the atoning work of Christ the same to the sinner as if he had never suffered; the work of the Spirit brought to a final close. He that is righteous will be righteous still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still!

3. The work of the Spirit is limited instrumentally to the Word of God. We say, indeed, that the Spirit is a sovereign in his work; but a sovereign worker may, at the same time, be a methodical worker. He is a sovereign in his work, because he works after his own pattern and not after ours. To us, his influences on the hearts of men appear, oftentimes, like the movement of the wind, concerning which we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. But as the winds of heaven have their laws, determining both their force and direction, though too intricate and subtle for our inspection, so, in reality, does the Holy Spirit observe his own methods of operation. Does he "reprove the world of sin?" It is by his word in their consciences. Does he strive with the sinner, and does the sinner resist? It is a striving by that truth "which commends itself to the conscience of every man in the sight of God;" and a resistance, too, made to the same truth. Does he bring the sinner unto God? It is "by the foolishness of preaching he

saves them that believe." Does he employ his ministers to achieve the conversion of men? He does it by the truth, — "for in Christ Jesus," said the most successful of Christ's ministers, "have I begotten you through the gospel." Does he appear on the earth, as on the day of Pentecost and at other remarkable periods, a mighty conqueror, prostrating hundreds and thousands in sweet submission at his feet? It is all done by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Does he sanctify and comfort the saints? He does this also by the same instrument. "Sanctify them," prays the Saviour for his disciples of every age, "through thy truth; thy word is truth." "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed," inquires the apostle, "and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And to the same effect are the words of the prophet, "My people are destroyed through lack of knowledge;" and again, "Where there is no vision (no light of divine truth), the people perish."

4. The Spirit is limited in his work on the hearts of men to the concurrence and coöperation of his people. This position we feel authorized to lay down as the rule which the Spirit has chosen, generally, to observe in his operations. There may be, apparently, exceptional cases under this rule; and yet, perhaps, the exceptions be such only in appearance. The agency of man in the conversion of sinners may, in many instances, be very different from what it appears to us. This agency may be remote from the scene where the effect is witnessed; and yet be very near and present, as viewed by the Holy Spirit, — near and present in that fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. The rule respecting the operations of the Spirit, as laid down in the Scriptures, is on this wise, — "Yet for all this will I be inquired of, by the

house of Israel, to do it for them." There must be the concurrence of God's people, and the coöperation, at least, of their prayers. In this sense, the Apostle denominates the saints "co-workers with God." Moreover, when he speaks of the work of the Spirit in connection with his own labors, he adds, "It is through your prayers." In all parts of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, when this work is alluded to, great stress is commonly laid on the concurrent operation of the people of God. When they speak often to one another, the Lord hearkens and hears. When they bring all the tithes into his store-house, then the windows of heaven are opened, and blessings are poured forth till there is not room enough to receive them. When they strive together in their prayers for the ministers of Christ, then the word of the Lord has free course and is glorified. Finally, the promises that secure the interposition of the Spirit, all seem to be conditioned on the coöperation of God's people; and to them is imputed the agency, and the sin of grieving and vexing the Spirit. And it deserves our most thoughtful consideration, what great power a single individual seems to be invested with on certain occasions, either for promoting or retarding the work of the Lord. You all remember the story of David, when he went forth with the joyful thousands of Israel to bring up the ark of God to his city, and how that pious design was defeated by the rash interposition of a single man. The aggrieved Spirit frowned into darkness the joy and jubilee of that day, and sent all Israel to their tents stricken with sorrow and with shame. You remember, too, how, in the days of Joshua, the whole host of Israel was arrested in their triumphs, and their hearts "melted and became like wax," because the Spirit of the Lord was grieved. It was only one man

who did the sin, and he an obscure man, and his offence a private one. Yet it was sufficient to stay the work of the Lord, and to demand a searching throughout the whole camp before God's Spirit would be entreated to go up with the people. All these considerations go to show that the people of God have a great influence on the work of the Spirit, and that there is a sense in which they may accelerate or retard his work.

But I proceed to our second inquiry.

II. In what sense is the Spirit of the Lord not straitened?

On this topic, I remark, in the first place, that no part of divine truth is of a quality to quench the Spirit's operations, or to diminish their power. It is sometimes suggested that great prudence and caution should be used in selecting topics suited to promote a revival of religion and the conversion of sinners. We must be especially careful, it is thought, to keep out of sight such doctrines as predestination, personal election, the sovereignty of God, and the absolute dependence of the sinner on divine grace, because of their supposed tendency to discourage human effort; to diminish the consciousness of guilt, and foster a state of indifference and security in the mind, or to awaken disgust and opposition. These truths, even though admitted to be of divine authority, are not unfrequently represented as hostile to religious impressions and, hence, as serving to counteract the work of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners. But, if these truths proceeded from the Spirit; if they are an essential part of that system of doctrines which he moved holy men to publish to the world; if they form, in connection with other truths, the edge and temper of that sword which he wields, which is the word of God; then, how can they serve, but by gross and

wicked perversion, to hinder his work? How can the Spirit's own instruments be supposed to defeat the very end for which they were wisely chosen? How can the sword turn against the hand that wields it, and even serve as a defence to those whom it would subdue? Do you say that the consciences of men do not respond to these sentiments; that the mind is distracted and perplexed by them; and that, therefore, they only serve to straiten the Spirit in his work? Why, then, let me ask, did not the all-comprehending mind of the Spirit foresee this and withhold them? Why did he select, as a means to an end, that which was not only inadequate, but in its own nature unsuited to the end? But it is not so. These truths do commend themselves to the conscience of every man, and the heart that can withstand all persuasion and gird itself up to defy all terror, quails and trembles under their withering power.

You remember the story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night to converse with him on the affairs of his soul. Christ received him kindly, and most earnestly and affectionately engaged in the work of his conversion. But how did he begin? Why, almost the first word he said to him was, "except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Here, the doctrine of regeneration and the absolute dependence of the sinner on the Holy Spirit for the performance of this work is the first lesson he gives the anxious inquirer. And the second lesson he gives is the sovereignty of God in renewing the heart, saying, "the wind bloweth where it listeth;" and "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Christ did not imagine that he was putting the Holy Spirit into straits by preaching thus to Nicodemus; or that, in any degree, he was hindering or retarding the work of God on his heart. And his antici-

pations were not disappointed in the result. Nicodemus became a renewed man, and an eminent disciple of Christ. He fearlessly lifted up his voice in defence of his Master before the scoffing Sanhedrim, and he was the only man to be found in all Jewry (saving Joseph of Arimathea) who, in that day of wrath and violence, dared to go in unto Pilate and demand the body of Jesus for interment. And it is not improbable that this very interview he had with Christ, and the soul-humbling doctrines he heard on this occasion, were the means, not only of his conversion, but of his becoming the bold, the determined, and steadfast disciple which he proved himself to be in an hour of general apostasy.

How often, too, on other occasions, do we hear the same divine Preacher, when he would arouse the multitudes from their carnal security and engage them in the earnest pursuit of their salvation, address them in language like the following: "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." "Many are called, but few chosen." How plainly, without misgiving or reserve, did the Apostles preach the doctrine of divine decrees, — not of divine providence merely, but of the pre-conceived purpose, without which the doctrine of a providence is unintelligible, — as the means of awakening sinners and of persuading the anxious to flee unto God. In that memorable sermon which Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and as the fruit of which no less than three thousand souls were awakened and renewed by the Spirit, we hear him proclaim, in audible and emphatic tones, a doctrine which in the opinion of some prudent men would destroy any revival of religion; saying, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge

of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." The Most High is here distinctly set forth, not simply as foreseeing, but as purposing, even the wicked actions of men; and yet this doctrine is used to promote the most illustrious revival of religion on record. The Holy Spirit, on this occasion, did not feel himself dishonored by this truth, nor did he give signs that his arm was paralyzed by it, so that he could not save.

In the second place, the Spirit is not straitened in his work by the simplicity of the means employed, or the absence of show and parade in the application of them. His own declared method of operation, we have said, requires the presence of divine truth, and, ordinarily, the concurrence of his people; but it does not require an ostentatious and imposing display of human means and efforts to make his power effective. The most glorious triumphs of the Holy Spirit, which his own pen has recorded, were those achieved in the absence of all such parade of means and measures. As an illustration of this fact, let me refer you to the account of the memorable events on the day of Pentecost, in the second chapter of the Acts. It is true a miracle had been wrought on the morning of that day; the Spirit descended and baptized the disciples with fire and they spoke with tongues. But what of all that? The people witnessed the miracle; but they only treated it with scorn and derision. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine." But now commenced the appropriate means on which the events of that day were made to depend. The twelve Apostles, unlearned and ordinary men, stood forth, modestly and respectfully, before this vast audience of unbelievers, and Peter, in their name, began to address the people. He spoke meekly and



affectionately unto them, rehearsing in simple narrative what God had done for their nation and the world, in giving his Son to be our Saviour, and reminding them of the ungrateful and wicked returns they had made for all this love and kindness. There was little said and nothing done,—nothing, save the silent but fervent supplications which rose, meanwhile, from the hearts of those who were with him. But enough was said and done to justify the Holy Spirit in reducing three thousand of that audience to the feet of Jesus.

Again, turn to the third chapter of the same book, and read what is there written. It was the hour of evening worship, when the daily sacrifice was offered, and the people resorted to the temple as they had been accustomed to do for a thousand years before, and as our families approach the domestic altar for morning and evening prayer. On this occasion, too, a miracle was wrought,—the lame man was healed. But these were now common occurrences, and excited, at the most, but curiosity and wonder; they convinced no man of sin. But now the means commenced. Two men stood up, as before, and spoke to the people. There was no parade; but little was said, and yet enough was said, and rightly said, to warrant the interposition of the Spirit. The sacrifice was offered, and the assembly broke up; but of the multitudes who then heard the word, five thousand of the men believed, and went down to their dwellings rejoicing in God.

Read next the story of Cornelius, recorded in the tenth chapter. He was concerned for the state and prospects of his soul; and that he might secure the counsel of some safe man in these weighty affairs, he sends to a neighboring city for a minister of Jesus. In the meantime, he collected his family and friends together that

they might receive the Lord's ambassador, and all be benefited by his instructions. Peter came and spoke to them of Christ; his manner of life, his doctrines, death, resurrection, and ascension into glory, and as he spoke the Holy Ghost fell on them all, and they believed and were baptized. Once more, read through the chapter that next follows, and observe by what simple methods and unpretending instruments the Holy Spirit spread his saving hand over the learned, the gay, the voluptuous city of Antioch. A few unlearned men from Cyprus and Cyrene, fleeing before the storm of persecution, had sought a refuge in this foreign city; but, possessing the spirit of Him in whose cause they suffered, they began to work in the quiet and modest way that became them as unlearned men and strangers. They spoke to the Grecians, and talked with them concerning Christ. But unpretending as were the agents, and simple and unimposing the means used, they allowed free and full scope to the power of the Spirit. "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

Such was the way things were done in the days of the holy Apostles. Simplicity characterized the whole operation. There was nothing imposing in forms, or startling in measures. Truth was uttered in its simplest form, and prayer made to God without ceasing. But these were the years of the right hand of the Most High. The word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. The Holy Spirit walked the earth, like a giant, from conquering to conquer. Divine grace fell like a vernal shower upon the earth after the desolation of winter, and the desert was made to rejoice.

O, how refreshing to one's soul to turn from the artful contrivances of these latter days to the quiet and

simplicity of apostolic times ;— times when truth and prayer, unaided by human artifice, were all the means employed to carry the cause of Christ, within the space of thirty years, to the utmost verge of the known world.

In the third place, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened in his work by his own appointed ordinances. The Divine Spirit has established certain institutions and observances, which are to be preserved and regularly maintained, as subsidiary to his work of grace in the world. He has instituted the Church, the visible family of Christ on the earth, the home and resting place of all “who are called to be saints.” He has instituted the Sabbath, and ordained it to be a day of rest from worldly cares and employments ; a day for religious instruction and for the worship of God. He has instituted the ministry of the word, to be cherished and honored and confided in by believers, till the world is converted and saints “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” He has instituted the public worship of God on the Sabbath and the administration of the Sacraments, directing us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. He has instituted discipline in his Church, and discipline and instruction in our families, and enjoined it upon the disciples to admonish, exhort, and reprove one another, as occasions may arise. He has given it in command to his Church to see to it, that the gospel is made known and preached to all who are destitute, even to every creature under heaven. He has enjoined the duty of doing good to all men, and especially to the poor and afflicted of Christ’s flock. He has instructed us daily to search his word ; daily to call on his name ; asking blessings for ourselves and for all mankind.

Now, if these ordinances should be all observed, even to the letter, and in the spirit of the same, would the Spirit of the Lord feel that his way was hedged up, or that something more was necessary in order that he should do his whole work? He could work without us; he has condescended to work with us, and made known the way in which he has chosen to work with us. He has told us what is to be done on our part, and has he not told us all? Did he overlook any methods, or was he mistaken as to the best methods? Nothing of this. Whatever his plan is, we believe that it is the best that is practicable; one that gives full and free scope to his divine power; that enables him to do his whole work, yea, and to do it with the greatest honor to himself, and the greatest safety to the Church, and to the greatest comfort and satisfaction of his people. "Do not my words (my plan, my mode of operation) do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

I remark, once more, that the Holy Spirit is not straitened in his work by a permanent, local ministry in his churches. We are led to a brief but distinct notice of this point, by the studied endeavors we witness at the present day to disparage and undermine the pastoral office. This office is represented as unfavorable to revivals, and a hinderance to the work of the Spirit. The doctrine embraced by multitudes is, that the power of the Spirit accompanies only a certain class of preachers, styled evangelists; that revivals are not to be expected under the labors of a settled pastor; that revivals are a commodity imported into a church, and not a growth springing up in the church as in its appropriate bed, under stated influences and regular cultivation.

But, to my mind, it is no less clear that the Holy Spirit has instituted the pastoral office than that he has insti-

tuted the Church. He who called the churches into being, directed also that elders should be ordained in every church. The same Lord Jesus who has provided for the perpetuity of the Church, has provided also for the perpetuity of the office of pastor and teacher. Indeed, for obvious reasons, the Church is not and cannot be a complete and perfect organization without an office in it answering to a pastor or bishop. Without this it is in a broken and mutilated state, like the body politic without a government, or the human body while some of its important functions are in a state of paralysis. The office of pastor is created *in* and *for* the benefit of the Church; it is filled by the choice of the Church. He who is called to fill it is vested with certain powers which every orderly body must vest in its presiding officer for the good of the body itself, while his duties and responsibilities as a public religious teacher and pastor are all defined in that constitution which is the common basis of all the churches. To repudiate the pastoral office, then, is only the first step towards repudiating the Church itself as a permanent, divine institution. They both rest on a common basis; both are a means to a common end. And let it ever be remembered that He who walks in the midst of the churches holds the stars of the churches in his right hand. So far then as the minister gives himself to his holy work; so far as he faithfully and ably dispenses the word and doctrine given him for dispensation; so far as he guards the liberties wherewith Christ has made his churches free, and seeks their unity, their growth in knowledge and grace, is he "to be esteemed very highly in love," and to be confided in as the chosen medium through which the Holy Spirit will pour the healthful influences of his grace into the bosom of his churches. And far be it

from our hearts to believe that the Spirit will repudiate or dishonor the ministry which the Lord Jesus has ordained. Far from us be the thought that the institutions of the gospel can be improved by the devices of men. Calling up to our remembrance the time when the regular clergy, so called, an itinerant order of monks and friars, irresponsible to the Church, and yet ingratiating themselves into her confidence until they had broken down her stated ministry and reduced all Christendom to the iron rule and bondage of Papal Rome, let us guard against the delusion that the Spirit has discovered in an exotic and irresponsible ministry a new and better instrumentality for doing his work.

From the subject before us, I am led to remark, in conclusion,

1. That the present is preëminently the dispensation of the Spirit. When our Saviour would console his disciples under the anticipation of his death, he assures them that the loss they would sustain by this event would be more than compensated by the gift of the Holy Spirit that should follow. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Christ has gone on his triumphal way; he is risen; he is ascended unto the glory which he had with the Father before the world began; and according to his promise the Spirit has made his public entrance into the Church. Zion is now, and henceforth she will be, to the end of the world, his peculiar abode. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He is now the representative of the Godhead here on earth. The recovery of lost men from sin and wrath to come; the keeping, the sanctification, and the comforting of the saints; the protection and enlargement of the Church,

are all committed to his hands. On him the whole Church leans for support; he alone is her light and guide, her consolation and joy. He supplies her children with bread from his word and ordinances, and causes them to drink at the wells of salvation. He multiplies converts to her from age to age, according to his good pleasure, diffusing her light and glory over the world, and making her sons and daughters meet for the inheritance of the saints. What a privilege to live in these latter days of the world! What motives has the Christian to take heed that he grieve not the Holy Spirit of God! What encouragement is extended to the weary and heavy-laden soul!

2. It may be expected that all truly sanctified ones will be submissive to the teachings of God's Spirit. "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" These last words are descriptive of the true people of God; of those who are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now it is a characteristic of such that they are not offended at the truth. However searching, however humiliating that truth may be to the natural heart, it encounters no opposition in the sanctified hearts of God's people. Divine grace has subdued this opposition, and the evidence of a gracious state within them lies in the fact that their hearts are brought into harmony with the truth. The words of God, the teachings of His Spirit, do them good; they are comforting and encouraging words to their souls. They are precisely the truths that suit the cravings of their minds; that stir them up to the lively exercise of love and hope; of prayer and praise; that encourage them in self-denial and in all duties, and prompt them to hold on to the end. And they see no good reasons why others should receive offence from these truths, neither do they apprehend any

danger from a plain and undisguised exhibition of them. They are good to themselves, and they see not why they may not do good to others. They are what the Spirit teaches; they have strengthened the Church and edified believers in all past ages, and they see not why they should not henceforth be the wisdom and power of God unto salvation.

3. We see how important that the Church carefully study the mind of the Spirit in all their endeavors to promote the kingdom of Christ, and be content in all things to follow his leadings. It is their privilege to be co-workers with God; at the same time it is in their power to grieve the Holy Spirit and thus to expose their own fields to be cursed with spiritual drought and sterility. Let them consider then that it is their part to follow, not to lead. Let them remember that the Spirit works by the truth and in answer to prayer; and that if they would admire his stately goings, they must be valiant for the truth as revealed in his word, and give themselves unto prayer. Let them not forget that the Holy Spirit is a jealous Spirit, and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.

Finally, our subject addresses itself to the unconverted sinner. It teaches him that there is a work to be wrought on his soul, to which he himself is naturally disinclined and for which he is dependent on the Spirit of God. This work, we have seen, must be accomplished in time, or it will remain forever undone. Consider, O sinner, that this work has been long neglected, long resisted on your part, and that the period in which it is possible to accomplish it is fast wasting away, and will soon expire. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Your opportunities, your calls and warnings have been many; but hitherto you have hardened your heart against the



strivings of the Holy Spirit. You have a heart that is enmity against God; by nature, you are a child of wrath, and the only hope that can be entertained for you springs from the sovereign mercy of God. And to that mercy you must flee, or be lost forever. The work of the Spirit is to save you from your sins. You must give up your opposition to the holy and sovereign will of God, and from an honest and good heart acquiesce in his word. I know of no other way to save a sinner. I know not how otherwise even the Holy Spirit can save you from the wrath to come. And do you fear to approach the Holy Spirit of God? Are you in doubt whether he will listen to your cry and grant you the help which you need? Listen to the grateful, the cheering words of the Spirit, — words that are recorded in the last book and the last chapter of Revelation, — words that form almost the last sentence which the Holy Ghost has spoken to man. “The Spirit and the Bride say come; let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” Take this invitation in your hand, O sinner, and go to him who works all our works in us, and you shall in no wise be cast out.

## SERMON VII.

### A SELFISH RELIGION.

“ THEN SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD, AND SAID, DOTH JOB FEAR GOD FOR NOUGHT? ” — *Job* i. 9.<sup>1</sup>

THIS chapter presents us with a dramatic scene that is alike remarkable for its argument and for the personages that conduct the dialogue. The speakers are the Most High God and Satan ; the one the representative of all good, and the other of all evil. The occasion that brought such opposite characters together is related as follows : “ There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.” Seeing his old adversary in the seat which he once filled, glorious above all the rest, as the evening star when it sheds its joyous light on the western heavens, God condescended to speak to him, as in the days of his innocence, asking him whence he came, and what the manner of his life. The other replied that he was a wandering spirit, “ going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.” Perceiving that his chosen abode was on the earth, and among the sons of men, God asks him about his servant Job, and what his thoughts were concerning him : “ Hast

thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, doth Job fear God for nought?"

The subject here propounded for argument between two personages,—the one exalted by his uncreated and glorious perfections, and the other formidable by the greatest intellectual gifts ever bestowed on the creature,—the subject propounded was one of the high and essential truths of divinity. The question involved was, in what does moral excellence, or true holiness, consist; and is such excellence to be found among men? This question was to be solved by an appeal to an existing case, that would serve to prove and illustrate both its parts at once. Among the sons of men there was one individual who was selected of God to test the point at issue. He was a man so eminent on the earth that his fame sounded through many countries, and was familiar to the ears of princes; and Satan, "who goes to and fro in the earth," had not overlooked him, but had known and considered him well. Now, says the Most High, is not this true and divine excellence to be found in this my servant? Satan concedes that Job had the appearance of being all that God had described him, "a perfect and an upright man, and one that feareth God and escheweth evil;" but he contends that the essential feature of moral excellence is not to be found in him. "Does he fear God for nought?" In other words, the religion of Job is a selfish religion; it proceeds from a low and unworthy motive, and therefore it is essentially defective. He has his price for fearing God, and it is because he is now receiving this price, or hopes to receive it hereafter, that he is so scrupulous and diligent in serv-

ing his Maker. "For," says Satan, "hast thou not made a hedge," a line of defence, "about him and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

The doctrine, then, which Satan maintains,—and his divinity he learned in heaven, in daily and nightly studies at the oracle of God,—his doctrine is, that a selfish serving of God is no true and acceptable service. If there be not a higher principle than self, and one that is the exact opposite of self, which generates and nourishes the religion of the soul and of the life, then such a religion is radically unsound, and in the sight of God can be regarded only as a refinement of the sordid, innate, and pervading profanity of the heart.

This we admit is high divinity for any being to maintain; but when we consider that it is one of those living principles of truth which was imbibed at the foot of God's throne in heaven, and was so deeply imprinted on the mind of an archangel that even the fall could not erase the impression; and, finally, that it was a truth which God himself recognized, in consenting to put the religion of his servant to the test, and thereby to ascertain whether it was selfish or not. When we consider all these things, we are driven into the concession that on this point, at least, the creed of Satan is orthodox, and deserves the most serious consideration of men on the earth.

"Doth Job fear God for nought?" Has he not a private and selfish end that he is pursuing in all his show of religion? Does not his religion begin and grow just where all sin and depravity take their rise, in

the native predominant selfishness of the heart? In all that he does, is he not earning his price, working for a personal reward? Is not the ground-motive, the spring of all his religion, a preëminent regard for his own security and happiness, and not for what is essentially right and just and good and for the glory of God?

The result of the trial, in the case of Job, proved indeed that Satan, keen and penetrating as is his intellectual vision, can not possess himself of all the secrets of the human heart, and that, for once at least, his most subtle inquiries were baffled. But this mistake did not affect the soundness of his divinity. The doctrine that a merely selfish religion is no true religion remained a sound doctrine still, although, contrary to Satan's expectations, it turned out that Job had a religion of a far higher order than this; a religion from which he could not turn and "curse God to his face," even though surrounded with the ruins of his wealth, the mangled and lifeless bodies of all his children, himself the victim of disease and beggary and despair, the reproach of his friends and the taunt of envious fools. His religion was an essential property of his very soul; the life of God entered into it, and transforming it from the image of the earthly into that of the heavenly,—a power working mightily within him, and thus reducing to obedience to the law of Christ every thought and every passion, and under the influence of which he could calmly say, in the midst of sudden and utter desolation of all creative good, "though he slay me, yet will I trust him." "He is my Father, my glorious God, the joy and confidence of my heart, and though his righteous purpose be to crush me and mine, yet I will cleave to him while I have any being." Yea, his was that true excellence which commended itself even to Satan, as originating

in a divine principle, even that principle of holy love "which seeketh not his own."

Two inquiries, then, are naturally suggested by the text for our consideration: first, What may be denominated a selfish religion? and second, Wherein is such a religion defective?

I. What may be denominated a selfish religion?

Here I must be permitted to remark, that we are not to suppose that, strictly speaking, there can be more than one kind of religion. True religion is pure and undefiled before God, even the Father; all else, whatever the appearance may be, is only religion "falsely so called," and is at the bottom unsound and delusive.

Again I would remark, that true religion is a character, an abiding aspect of the soul, and not a mood or a humor. And here is a distinction so obvious and so important, that even a child is competent to apprehend and to appreciate it. That child has a fond and indulgent father; this is his character, — the steadfast disposition and habit of his mind; but that same father is sometimes peevish and passionate, and these are his moods and humors; and the child is quick to discern when they are on and when off, and the possession of this secret gives him a power over the parent which he wields, at times, with great dexterity and effect.

Every man has many moods; but no one has more than one character. His character is that by which he is known and appreciated; for it is that abiding aspect under which he appears when the gushes of feeling and passion have given place to the steady and quiet operation of the steadfast principle and habit of his soul. Now, we say that religion is a character, and not a mood; it is the abiding aspect under which the man appears when he is properly himself, and not a humor, — a fitful,

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temporary gust that passes over the man, and which, for the honor of human nature we say it, forms as little of the true character of the man as the fleeting clouds and puffing squalls of spring-time form a part of the deep blue sky that reposes tranquilly above them.

Furthermore, true religion is founded in principle. This principle the Saviour denominates "the leaven that leavens the whole lump." The apostle John terms it "the seed" that remaineth in those that are born of God, so that "they cannot sin." Another apostle styles it "the engrafted word," and all of them designate it by the familiar word *grace*. It is called a principle, not only because it is the beginning of a religious state in the soul, but the living, stedfast root which sustains and cherishes this state. Religion of course embraces feelings and emotions; but it is not made up of feelings and emotions, for the reason that these are transitory, whereas religion is abiding. "If ye have my word abiding in you, then are ye my disciples indeed." The true element of religion is deeper than mere feeling, and the office of religious feeling seems to be to indicate the existence of the principle, and to show its nature and strength.

If, then, the basis of true religion is an abiding, living principle in the heart, the question arises, What is the character of this principle? Is it a selfish principle or is it something else? All men admit of a principle of selfishness in the human heart, a pervading, inborn propensity to make our own interest the ultimate end of pursuit. "Man is a selfish being," is a saying which all understand, and the truth of which is conceded by all; and the import of this saying is not merely that men occasionally fall into a selfish humor, that they have at times fits and feelings of selfishness, but that a

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self-seeking spirit inheres in them ; that we always expect to find it in men, and in reference to which we are compelled at all times to make our calculations : a spirit, in short, so incorrigible and so subtle, that the most ingenious mind finds never-ceasing occasion to suspect its presence, and to resist its power within himself. Now, the question is, Can this principle be the foundation and source of true religion ? In other words, Can man in his religion be selfish in the same sense that he is selfish in the pursuit of riches, honor, or pleasure ? In answer to this it should seem that all men would say, "No; even Satan could maintain that a merely selfish religion was no religion at all."

But the question comes back, When does religion show itself to be selfish ? We answer, that our religion is selfish when it seeks its highest end in self. If our chief end is to honor ourselves by our religion, is to make ourselves happy by our religion, or indeed, if our object is merely to save our souls from eternal misery by our religion, then is our religion selfish. It is used as a convenient instrument for securing a private end ; of gratifying some circumscribed claim, or allaying some private fear of the heart, and is therefore selfish. For instance, I feel myself, from some cause or other, to be a very unhappy and miserable man ; all my prospects for life are overcast ; kindnesses and cares, friends and enemies, all alike disquiet and trouble me, and nothing administers peace. But I am told that religion will cure it all, and make me a happy man. I take the advice, resolve to lay my troubles at the door of this kind physician and devote myself to duties and self-denials. My object is to get rid of my troubles and provide comfort for my soul ; an object that I never lose sight of, and the influence of which girds me with



strength and patience in all my endeavors. I adopt a religious life because it is the only remedy for my troubles; in other words, my religion seeks its end in self and of course it is like its end, selfish. Again, I know myself to be a sinner; "for there is not a just man on the earth that doeth good and sinneth not," and, moreover, I know that the penalty of sin is the loss of the soul, and hence I am daily distressed with thoughts of eternal misery. But religion, I am told, is the remedy for this evil; it will deliver the soul from death and secure for it eternal happiness and glory in heaven; hence I resolve to be religious. I submit to religious crosses for the sake of an unspeakable good in prospect; just as a worldly man submits to toil and privation in the hope of acquiring riches and fame. Self in both cases is the chief end; and the means in both cases, being the same with the end sought, is also selfish. These examples, I conceive, will illustrate the meaning of the expression in the text, "Does he fear God for nought?" In other words, they show us what a merely selfish religion is. It is a set of duties taken up, or crosses submitted to, because they are conducive to our peace in this life, or to our salvation hereafter. The end is personal; we look no further than our own interests; we serve for a prize and a reward, as Satan represents Job to have done; we submit to a task in expectation that God will pay us for it, and for the sake of the pay; and this surely must be a religion of selfishness. Religion in this case is submitted to for the good it promises, not embraced as being in itself the highest possible good; we treat the whole affair as a bargain we make with God, rather than as a duty we owe Him, irrespective of the good or evil that may follow in its train. Sin is resisted, not because it is exceedingly wrong and odious,

but because it is an avenger, and will surely find us out. God is loved not because He is infinitely lovely, but because He is necessary to our safety and happiness. It is, as before remarked, a serving of God with a view to the prize, and with no other reference but to the reward. "Does Job fear God for nought?" But we are led forward to the other question.

## II. Wherein is this religion defective?

1. It is defective, in the first place, because it merges the Creator in the creature. Instead of exalting God as "the all and in all," the end of all things as well as the beginning, it reduces Him to the humble station of a servant to the creature He has made. The heart is not given to religion because of its exceeding beauty and excellence and truth, and from an inward, constraining force; but from a sense of interest. It is not the soul lifted up to God in wonder and delight as its all-glorious, all-sufficient portion, but God brought down from his high and holy place to do service for our good. The creature's happiness is the chief end; and God and religion are regarded only as the necessary means of securing this end. And what is this but merging the Creator in the creature, and making not the glory of God the end of our being, but our private present good the end of God's being.

2. This sort of religion is defective because it fails to answer the demands of conscience. No man's conscience can be satisfied with a religion that is merely selfish. Conscience requires a religion that is the fulfilment of a duty, not of a bargain. It recognizes a moral obligation on our part to fear and serve God; an obligation that is perfect in itself irrespective of the good or the evil that may flow from our discharging or neglecting to discharge it. Were there no heaven and no hell revealed,

there is still that within us whose voice, in distinct and audible tones, would respond to the law of our Maker and say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." God is worthy of engrossing the thoughts and affections; worthy to be loved on His own account, for the high, unutterable glories of his own nature; and unless He be loved for what He is in Himself, then is He loved only as a means to a selfish end, and therefore is not truly loved at all. These are the teachings, the loud and authoritative teachings of every man's conscience. The conscience even of Satan could not respect a religion that began and ended in self. He spoke disparagingly and contemptuously of the religion of Job, because he suspected it was selfish, and therefore concluded it was unsound. It was not that religion which he had known in his better days, and among the sons of God. And shall man in a state of probation and misery, with the light of God's word to guide his inquiries, and with the eternal destiny of his soul hanging on the issue, remain satisfied with a religion which cannot answer the conscience even of the Prince of darkness.

3. A religion that is purely selfish would fill the world with derision and strife, and this shows the unsoundness of its nature. No man can be ignorant of the fearful and pernicious tendency of a selfish principle. It is the source from which flow all the bitter waters that afflict the world. The derisions and strifes, the proud, oppressive acts of violence and vengeance, and the wars that have scourged the miserable race of men, are the legitimate offspring of that innate tendency in every man's bosom to set up his own will and interest against the right and happiness of all the world. And a selfish principle is an evil principle, and only evil, wherever

found. Adopt it as a religious principle and its effects on the harmony and happiness of the world will be the same. It matters not whether a man serves God from selfishness, or the world from selfishness; he will find that his self will clash with every other man's self, and that his interest can be secured only at the expense of all the rest. In a world where the selfish principle predominates, general harmony and peace are out of the question; they are blessings to be desired, not realized. And can a religion that yields such bitter fruits of discord and strife and hatred be divine? What can any religion, considered as a remedial measure, be desired for, but to expose, subdue, and finally exterminate such an evil power from the family of God.

4. Once more, a religion that is purely selfish is a religion of nature, not of grace. It implies no change of the heart as its foundation, and consequently requires no interposition or aid from the Holy Spirit. All that is needful to form and perfect such a religion is to give a new direction to the selfish principle that is innate and predominant in the natural heart. Heretofore this principle sought present happiness by worldly means; now it pursues eternal happiness by religious means. The working principle remains the same; the end sought essentially the same; that is, it is selfish; the only change is in the means. And if selfishness is only another name for depravity, then a selfish religion is only depravity under a mask. The fountain from which it proceeds is that out of which issue "evil thoughts" and all "the works of the flesh." It is not a religion that purifies the heart, because it is built upon and sustained by our merely earthly nature, and that, too, a nature depraved. It is not a religion that lifts the soul to God and makes it like God, because it is of the earth and

therefore earthy ; because the principle that pervades it is that " of enmity against God."

Such is a religion that is purely selfish ; a religion that finds its end in self and not in God. It is a religion which God abhors, and for which even Satan can feel no respect. That this, and this only, is the religion which many in this world possess there is too much reason to fear. It is embraced, or rather submitted to, as a remedy for present fears and distress ; as a preventive to that eternal misery which awaits the irreligious, and on this ground and for this reason it is cherished. They choose religion because religion makes them happy. And as they degrade the uses and ends of religion, so they let down also the high and divine nature and dignity of the thing itself. Instead of regarding it as that new birth, in which a divine life begins in the soul that was before " dead in sin ;" instead of viewing it as a regeneration, in which " the old man is crucified with its affections and lusts," and " all things made new in Christ Jesus ;" they look upon it as a mere transition from a sad and gloomy state into one that is peaceful and joyous. It is not a turning from sin as exceedingly sinful, and a cleaving of the soul to God as infinitely glorious because infinitely holy ; but it is taking up fashionable crosses and submitting to prescribed duties for the sake of the comfort which they are taught to believe will follow. And when you ask them the reason of the hope that is in them, their answer is, " O we are so happy now, and everything looks so happy, and such bliss and glory awaits us when we die."

A few reflections suggest themselves from the subject before us, to which I would call your attention before I close.

1. If a selfish religion is radically unsound, and therefore unsafe, then great caution becomes us in scrutinizing

the hopes we cherish. "Hope on, and hope ever," it is to be feared, is a maxim too nearly attuned to much of the religious instruction of the day. But alas! "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death." There is a religion which the heart loves and cleaves unto with a fatal grasp, but which God abhors and even Satan despises. What delusions may not a wicked, selfish, and treacherous heart practise upon us. Surely, then, it becomes us all to keep a wakeful and jealous eye on the workings of our own hearts, to scrutinize the dark as well as the bright side of our experience, and see to it that on our hearts is shed abroad, by the Holy Ghost, that love "which seeketh not her own." Sad must it be for the soul, if its religion proves at the last to be only such as Satan himself will make a mock of.

2. Our subject reveals the nature and necessity of regeneration. That religion which is according to the word of God, and which is unto salvation, is a religion of grace. It begins in grace, is cherished by grace, is perfected by grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am," is the devout and joyful expression, not only of the great apostle on earth, but of all the redeemed in glory. On the other hand, the religion of nature is a selfish religion, a religion that begins and ends in self. God is recognized in it only as a necessary means to a higher end, — the safety and glory of the creature. To regenerate a man, then, is to impart to him a religion that is opposed to nature; it is to rescue him from the control of a selfish, and bring him into subjection to a gracious principle, which "seeketh not her own; it is to subvert within him the vile and degrading power that holds the world in bondage, and to teach him to find an object for his affections and the end of his being out of himself and in the glorious God that made him. This

is the nature of regeneration ; and to know its nature is to feel its necessity. A selfish religion is rejected by the conscience of every man ; it is the scorn of Satan. Marvel not, then, O man, at the truth, " Ye must be born again." " Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Finally, this subject suggests some important hints to guide ministers and churches in their endeavors for the salvation of men. Selfishness is not the cause or the occasion of man's salvation, but of his ruin. It first alienated the soul from God, and taught man to make a god of himself. It is the evil power that now holds the sons of men in bondage to their vile affections and lusts. It is the carnality of the mind, "which is enmity against God." It repels the approach of divine grace, that would liberate the soul and restore it to God. And the great question to be considered is, How shall this fearful power be dislodged, and its miserable subjects led forth from this prison-house into the liberty of the sons of God? Appeals may be made to it, to abdicate and let the sons of bondage go free ; but this only stimulates its vigilance to guard its throne the more securely. By a little dexterity we may divert it from its accustomed channels, and teach it to submit to the duties and crosses of religion, but it is still selfishness, "enmity against God," and the religion it fosters is a religion of nature, and serves to drown the soul in destruction and perdition. Of what possible avail, then, are all our alliances with a principle that is only evil, and that continually. Self will never be persuaded to repudiate self, or be cajoled into an act of self-destruction.

But there is an antagonist power to this wicked spirit in high places. Grace is that power, and the doctrines of grace the weapons of its triumphant warfare. These

weapons, keen and bright, must be brought forth from the armory of God, and the strongholds of selfishness assailed. His presence and dominion in the soul must be loudly proclaimed, his manifold wiles and subtleties boldly exposed, and the warning note, loud and solemn, rung in the sinner's ear, to come out from beneath the feet of the sorcerer, lest he be partaker in his plagues. God, most holy in his perfections; most righteous in his claims; jealous of his honor; glorious in his sovereignty; God, of purer eyes than to behold sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty, — are truths that must not be concealed, unless we would rivet the chains that now bind the victims of a selfish principle. Sin, too, as "exceedingly sinful"; sinners, the voluntary slaves of vile idolatry; conversion, as a hearty renunciation of self for God; Christ, as saving his people from their sins; and religion, as a life of God in the soul, — these, under God, are the doctrines before which lofty imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against God, are cast down, and by which every thought is brought into captivity to the law of Christ. These, my beloved brethren, are the themes to engage our nightly studies, and on which our most earnest tones are to be heard in the sanctuary; these are the topics to be restored to our conference rooms and to our domestic circles, if we aspire to the honored instrumentality of turning sinners to righteousness, and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

A selfish religion, — we say it, brethren, in all charity towards the household of God, — a selfish religion, it is to be feared, has in these latter days insinuated itself into the church of Christ, — a religion that reverses the settled order of creation, making the creature and his good the chief end of all things, and God and his glory



a necessary means to that end. Listen to the instructions of the pulpit, and how unreserved, how reiterated, how thrilling its appeals to the selfish principle! How unblushingly is religion, that great temple of truth and love and purity, radiant with its own essential and eternal glory, and to be admired for its own loveliness, — how is it degraded into a mere vehicle to convey poor abject creatures from a state of misery to one of happiness! Our ministry and churches, in former times, recoiled from the heresy of the gifted Paley, who, in his system of morals, has defined virtue to be “obedience to the will of God for the sake of everlasting happiness.”

But has not this heresy in morals long since become sound orthodoxy in the divinity of the pulpit? What, at this day, is deemed necessary, in the opinion of multitudes, to initiate and bear along to glorious success a revival of religion, but just to stimulate and then skillfully direct the selfish propensities in man? But I forbear.

Heaven, my brethren, is now and ever will be what it was in that day of high antiquity, when Satan, a tall archangel, bowed his knee before the throne of his Maker, and imbibed those truths which “wake to perish never,” a world into which sin, and therefore selfishness, do never enter. Be it our concern, then, as we shall answer to him who careth for souls, to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men hear or forbear.

Truth, rightly divided, is an exterminating sword to the selfishness of the heart. Hold it forth in its native lustre and power, and when sinners are converted they will be converted to God. Hold it forth, and the churches will awake to righteousness. Hold it forth in the love of it, and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.

## SERMON VIII.

### CONSCIENCE.

**"BUT STRONG MEAT BELONGETH TO THEM THAT ARE OF FULL AGE, EVEN TO THOSE WHO BY REASON OF USE HAVE THEIR SENSES EXERCISED TO DISCERN BOTH GOOD AND EVIL."**—*Heb. v. 14.*<sup>1</sup>

THE apostle is here treating of the right method of guiding the mind to an understanding of spiritual things, and to illustrate his idea he adverts to the obvious analogy in the outward and inner state of man. The human body, like every other thing which has life, is subject to the law of growth and development. At first it is small and feeble; it needs to be borne in the arms of another, and then to be guided by the hand. Years are required to rear it up to the stature and firmness, and to endue it with the skill, of perfect manhood. There is, moreover, a singular feature of the animal economy which obtains also in relation to the human body, namely, that certain organs of essential use in the more mature stages of its growth are at first but imperfectly, or not at all, developed. By this circumstance nature herself indicates not only the degree of care which these bodies need in their tender state, but also the kind of nutriment which is proper for them in their progressive stages. So long as the mouth of the infant

is unsupplied with teeth, we are admonished that meat and other kinds of solid food are not the appropriate means of its nourishment. Now, from the teaching of nature in regard to the physical structure of man, the Apostle derives a rule to guide us in nurturing and training the spiritual constitution of man. In this, as in the other case, we are to suit our means to the state and progress of the subject. The mind has its infancy as well as the body, — a state in which all its faculties are at the best feeble, and some of them in a latent and undeveloped state. Like the body, it needs to be nourished and strengthened by food and exercise; and these, both in kind and degree, must be suited to its present state and capacity. To attempt to administer to the infant mind what is suited only to the mind in its more perfect state, would be as preposterous as to attempt to nourish the infant body on the strong meat which belongeth to the full grown man.

Moreover, the apostle carries his illustration one step further, and employs it in elucidating the method by which the truths of revelation are to be imparted to the believing mind, and the spiritual life of the soul nourished up to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. This life, like that of the body and also of the mind, has its incipient, its infant state; and there is food in the storehouse of God's word suited to this state. The young and inexperienced believer is to be treated after the same rule which guides us in administering to the wants of the infant body. We are not to tax its feeble powers with what is unsuited to its stage of development, and what at present it is unable to digest. Things that are the most simple are first to be exhibited, and when these are fully digested and assimilated to the wants of the new life, and strength is thereby

administered, then may we with profit exhibit those that are higher and of more difficult apprehension. This is the order that Nature indicates in her works, and the same which the apostle adopts in building up the life of God in the soul. They were believers of a juvenile growth whom he addresses in the context, and he assigns this as the reason for diverting his remarks from the theme on which he was discoursing to one less difficult of apprehension: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered (difficult to be expressed in language intelligible to you), seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." There is an intimation in these words that a wrong method had been pursued with the disciples; that they had not mastered first principles before they proceeded to higher ones, and hence they needed to be brought back, and led over the ground again. They were in the condition of children who had been taught to think that they were men, and been put forward to the studies and exercises of men, to the neglect of those which became their age, and without which they would remain children in understanding and knowledge. Even though they were of years enough to become teachers, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness," for he is a babe. "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

From these last words we gather the following important truths, namely, that there is an essential and eternal contrariety between good and evil; that there is a power

or susceptibility in every human mind to discern this contrariety; that this power or susceptibility is improved by experience; and, lastly, that the degree of perfection which this power attains is in proportion to the attainment of grace in the heart, and is the best evidence of a gracious state.

1. There is an essential and eternal contrariety between good and evil. The expression "to discern both good and evil" manifestly implies that there is that in the one which distinguishes it from the other. The good is not seen to be evil, nor the evil to be good; but the one is seen to be the opposite of the other. Again, no one will be at a loss to determine what kind of good and evil is here spoken of. The apostle is not treating of things which affect the bodily senses, and of course he cannot allude to physical good and evil. He has reference to things which have relation to the law of God as their proper test and criterion, things which are recognized by this law as being right or wrong, as possessing moral excellence or moral turpitude. Now it is among the first things which men learn by experience, that some things are good and some are evil. The infant learns that milk is good. It is good to the taste, and it satisfies his hunger. He learns that fire, when applied to his hands, is an evil; it creates pain, and his experience teaches him to avoid it. As he grows older he becomes acquainted with another kind of good and evil. He sees a difference between obeying his parents and disobeying them, between loving his companions and hating them, between speaking the truth and uttering a falsehood. In this case the good and evil are not things which he sees or tastes or hears, but things which his mind feels. They are not things which create either pleasure or pain to his body, but which make his mind

happy or miserable. Of course they are in their nature different from the good and evil first spoken of.

But the difference between natural good and evil is not perceived to be necessary; it is purely a matter of arbitrary appointment on the part of the Creator. The difference is not eternal; there was a time when it did not exist, and we can easily conceive that things might be so changed as that the good should become evil, and the evil good. We see not, except as experience has taught us, why fire might not nourish our bodies, and milk consume them, as well as the opposite to this. But can we conceive how the other kinds of good and evil should be interchanged? Is it possible that to obey our parents, to love our companions, to speak the truth, can ever be evil, and make us feel miserable; or that the opposites of these can ever be good, and make us feel happy? We say, then, that the difference between these kinds of good and evil is a necessary and eternal contrariety; it has always been what it is now, and it will continue the same forever. We cannot conceive that it should be otherwise. This difference, then, I remark, does not depend on the will of God. The will of God recognizes the difference between good and evil, and harmonizes with it. His will approves of the good, and renounces the evil; and it requires us moreover to recognize the difference even as he does. But there is a sense, we may suppose, in which this difference is independent of him, and is not the effect of his ordination any more than his own existence is the effect of his volition. He exists, we say, by virtue of necessity; by virtue of a like necessity we say, also, right is contrary to wrong, the law of what is good contrary to the law of what is evil. The distinction between holiness and sin was in eternity as necessary to the mind of God as his power or wisdom was necessary to the perfection of his existence.

2. Much less does the difference between good and evil depend on the authority of man, or of human laws. This proposition we are aware, will seem to some to be quite unnecessary after what has been said, and yet perhaps it hits more practical errors than even my first statement. Did you never know a person decline his obligation to perform a certain duty merely on the ground that he had never given a formal promise that he would perform it? And what is this but making his own agreement the ground of his duty, and of course, making the difference between good and evil to depend on his own will? But how does it lessen my obligation to do an act of justice or mercy, that I have not promised to do the act? Again, did you never know a person refuse to pay a debt that had become outlawed, even when he was abundantly able to pay it? Did you never know a man strive to overreach his neighbor, in a case in which the law of the land did not reach; or seek to avoid a fair contract by availing himself of some flaw in the instrument, or of the want of a witness? Now these, and a hundred like cases, presuppose that there is no obligation resting upon men other than what the law of the land imposes; that there is no difference between right and wrong save what that law creates. I am right if the law bears me out; he is wrong who cannot bring the law to support him. Yes, the law of man is the foundation and touch-stone of a great deal of this world's morality. Men do not seem to recognize, so gross have their hearts become by reason of sin, that great moral government of the eternal God, in which all human laws and government are swallowed up and lost, like the light of the taper in the beams of the noon-day sun. They consider not that truth and falsehood, honesty and fraud, are necessarily

and eternally contrary to each other in nature, and no law of man can make it otherwise. They consider not that what is innocent, that is, unpunishable under human law, may be damnable sin in the eye of an eternal law, and that it is the height of presumption to expect that because we have escaped here we shall also escape at a higher tribunal.

3. There is a power or susceptibility in every human mind to discern this contrariety between good and evil. The apostle speaks of senses to discern both good and evil. Now a sense is distinguishable from an acquirement or a habit, inasmuch as one is a part of the human constitution, and the other is the result of experience. A man by habit or long use is enabled to make nice distinctions between the colors and relative distances of objects; but no man by habit acquires the power of seeing. Seeing comes first and habit afterwards. Sight depends on one of the senses of the human body, an organ that is necessary to the perfect structure of the system. Now it is readily admitted that the word "senses," in our text, does not mean our outward senses, for it is not the office of these organs to receive impressions from moral objects. The word applies to an organ of the mind, some susceptibility which it has, suited to discern the nature of moral and spiritual things. It is called a sense, because it receives impressions from things without itself, and because it is an organ that is essential to a properly constructed mind. Man does not acquire it any more than he acquires an outward sense, as that of seeing or hearing. It is organic, that is, a necessary property or function of the mind. In other places it is called by the same apostle, conscience: "their consciences meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;" "their conscience being seared, as with a



hot iron." These last words imply the same thing that is expressed in the text, that conscience is organic, something that may suffer violence or injury; it may be seared, even like the skin when a hot iron or burning coals are applied to it. And it is worthy of notice that in this use of terms there is a singular but undesigned coincidence between the apostle and the most eminent ethical writers of modern times. These writers employ both terms, "conscience" and "moral sense," to denote a certain susceptibility of the mind to distinguish between what is morally good and what is morally evil.

The idea that conscience is a mere opinion, as likely, perhaps, to be wrong as right,—an opinion subject to all the influences that affect opinions on other matters, and of course as different in different individuals as are the opinions of the same individuals on other subjects,—such an idea receives no support from the apostle. He makes the test of moral actions the same in kind with the test of visible objects. In both cases it is a sense, an organic susceptibility. It belongs to one as truly as it belongs to another; just as all men have the same set of bodily senses, though use and experience may make them more perfect in one than in another. And we cannot well conceive how it should have been otherwise, if man was intended to be an accountable being. How was he to know what was right and what was wrong, when he might hope to be approved of God, or when he had reason to fear his displeasure, unless he were furnished by his constitution with some adequate guide? If man was intended for the outer world, to be conversant with material objects, it would be in accordance with reason that he should be fitted by the provisions of his nature for that state. How could he preserve himself for a single day, without sight or feeling or hear-

ing to guide him? If he were left in this mutilated state to depend on experience, he must inevitably perish before experience could be brought to his aid. And with no less difficulties would a moral being be surrounded, without a sense to enable him to discern both the good and the evil. Nay, without it, as an original part of his very constitution, we cannot see how experience or instruction could avail him. Without sight the mind can form no just idea of light or colors. No description of the objects could impart such an idea to him, and for the reason that there is not in his being a foundation to receive such an idea. And, for the same reason, we may ask, how could one who was not an accountable being, by creation, ever become one? How could an idea of good or evil ever be imparted to him without a sense to receive it? Every other power of the mind might be perfect, yet without a conscience he could never appreciate the difference between holiness and sin, any more than without an eye he could appreciate the difference between opposite colors, though every other sense of the body were in a perfect state. Reason, then, confirms the statement of the apostle, that the mind of man is supplied with a sense to discern both good and evil, and to feel the difference there is between them. It is this gift that makes man an accountable being. It is his conscience that occasions his obligation to be a good man; it is this that makes him a subject of moral government. He is capable, by nature, of feeling that there is such a thing as right and such a thing as wrong, and this capacity brings him within the authority of all that is right and true and holy, and subjects him to the consequences of disregarding the monitions of this power within. I repeat it, it is not because he has the Bible to instruct him, it is not

because God has commanded it, it is not because he has received life and mercies innumerable at the hand of God, though these may increase his obligations; it is not these that impose the duty on him to hate sin and be a holy man. His obligations are derived from the fact that he has a conscience, and though God had not commanded, nor one mercy from the throne had reached him, he would still be a self-condemned, miserable man, if conscience were not heeded and obeyed.

4. The power or susceptibility of the mind to discern between good and evil is improved by experience. Hence the apostle says of those who had grown up to the stature of men in the things of Christ, and had exercised themselves unto godliness, that they had improved this power of moral discernment in a corresponding degree. "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." That even the conscience should be affected by appropriate culture and care, and become more perfect in its power of discernment, as the mind itself was perfected, need not appear surprising. This is the uniform law of all the other powers and faculties of the human mind, and we see no reason why it should not obtain in regard to the moral sense. Time is required even for the development in a slight degree of some of the noblest powers of our nature. How could we know, or suspect even, that the infant was a rational being, only as we perceive that it belongs to our species? Reason, which distinguishes man from the brute, is the last power of the mind to come forth from its latent state. The influence which use has in the senses of the body, to which the apostle likens conscience, is apparent to every one. The eye, for instance, at first gives no impression of distance

or magnitude, and perhaps not even a perception of any outward substance. But what change in its capacity and power does it receive from use. Objects in time assume before it their proper form and distances and magnitudes. It discerns things that are minute and those that are not. It takes in at one view the earth and the heavens, and fills the mind of the beholder with all the glory and majesty of the Creator's works. In like manner the moral sense of the mind is more and more developed by use, and by appropriate study and care is carried forward unto perfection. Time and exercise enable it to discern both good and evil, when once, perhaps, it perceived neither; and, moreover, the good appears more desirable and excellent, and the evil more hateful and vile.

But it is to be borne in mind that the apostle does not say that this sense improves, as a matter of course, with our years; it only improves by *use*. And, moreover, he would emphasize the word *use*; as if he had said, it is use, and not abuse, by which the "senses are exercised to discern," etc. In the first place, then, the conscience is to be exercised in order to be improved. No faculty of the human system is improved in any other way. The muscles of the body lose their contractile power by long confinement, and become useless. The sight is impaired rather than strengthened by being long closed or excluded from the light. Memory, reason, all the powers of the intellect, are weakened, if not destroyed, by inactivity. If, then, use would improve the sense by which we discern the things of God, and apprehend the powers of the world to come, we must keep it employed. In the second place, we must employ it aright. There is such a thing as using the conscience only to abuse it. If I use my conscience only to suit

my interest or convenience, what do I else than abuse it. If I strain it to magnify the faults of other men and to make them appear even worse than they are, and contract it when I look at my own, that they may appear much less than they really are, is not this an abuse of conscience? If I try to hide my sins, or if I shut out all that goes to aggravate them, and let in all that may seem to palliate, is not this an abuse of conscience? The only way to improve conscience by exercise, is to use it fairly and honestly. Things must be looked at with a full and open vision; they must be contemplated without prejudice or favor, even as an upright judge canvasses the evidences before him; we must suffer conscience to have the benefit of all that goes to aggravate, as well as what seems to mitigate, an offence, if we would make it skilful in discerning righteous judgment.

5. The degree of perfection which the conscience attains by use, is in proportion to the attainment of grace in the heart, and is the best evidence that the heart is in a gracious state. The evidence given in the text, that believers are not babes, but full grown men in the life of God, is, that they have their "senses exercised to discern both good and evil." It is not their hopes nor assurances, their joys nor their raptures. It is not their zeal, nor their exertions, nor their sacrifices, which constitute the best evidence of their great attainments in the grace of God, or even of their having any grace at all. It is that they have a conscience in all things; a conscience that is wide awake; a conscience that is supreme over the heart, over the will, and over the life; a conscience that is quick to discern the evil as well as the good; a conscience that has no partiality and no mercy; a conscience that feels the pressure of a mote as sensibly

as that of a beam; a conscience, in fine, whose voice is like the music of angels to those who follow her guidance, and more terrific than the thunders of God in the ear of the transgressor. This was the conscience of Paul; and he strove to keep it "void of offence both towards God and towards men." He had it, indeed, from the hand of his Maker, but grace taught it discernment by reason of use, and thereby made it a guide and a comforter to this eminent disciple. He walked in the light of it, and striving to bring every imagination and thought of his heart into captivity to it, he rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.

See to it then, O disciple, that in estimating the evidence of your good estate, you leave not conscience out of your reckoning. Let nothing satisfy you but what was sufficient to satisfy Paul. And to this end ponder well these remarkable words of his in which he sums up the evidence of his hope, that he had an inheritance with them who are called to be saints. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." 2 Cor. i. 12.

## SERMON IX.

### THE LAW BROKEN BY A SINGLE OFFENCE.

“FOR WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.” — *James* ii. 10.<sup>1</sup>

THE maxim here laid down by the apostle, is designed to test the question of obedience to the law of God. This question he gives us to understand, is to be determined, not by the instances which may exist of conformity to the law, but by the cases of transgression. The former, though numerous, and extending almost to every precept of the law, do not make out a case of obedience; while the latter, though confined to one section of the law, and to a single instance of wilful transgression, constitute a case of unmitigated offence, and justly subject the perpetrator to the penalty of the law.

This rule the apostle brings forward in the chapter before us for the benefit of those disciples to whom the epistle was addressed. They were professed believers, and the test of their faith in Christ was their obedience to the law of God. But in applying this test they were to consider that obedience was universal, in order to constitute the evidence desired. If ye fulfil the royal

law according to the scripture,—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,—ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin and are convinced of the law, that is, convicted by the law as transgressors. Here it is implied that the letter of the law may in many particular cases be observed; and at the same time its whole spirit in one respect be disregarded. They may pay an undue deference to certain persons in their assembly on account of their worldly riches and grandeur, and, on the other hand, treat with undeserved neglect another class on account of their poverty and vile raiment. Here now was a partiality betrayed which was in contravention of the spirit of the law; and which by consequence served to impair and vitiate the evidence which otherwise their obedience might furnish of the genuineness of their faith. There was much of seeming conformity to the law in their treatment of each other; while at the same time there was one case of palpable and habitual violation, and by this one they were “convinced of the law as transgressors.” For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

The doctrine here laid down we propose to illustrate by a few remarks, and then to deduce from it some practical reflections.

That the whole of any law is virtually and truly broken by the violation of one of its parts will appear when we consider,

I. That the whole law springs from one and the same source, and each of its parts rests on the same authority. This is the argument used by the apostle to sustain the position taken in the text. Having asserted that to have offended in one point is to be guilty of all, he proceeds to the proof,—“for he that said, Do not commit adul-



tery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor of the law." It is one undivided and indivisible authority that pervades the whole. It is all concentrated, so to speak, in each and every part of it; so that at every point at which we approach it, we are confronted with the whole authority of him who ordained the law. There may indeed be a relative importance attached to the several sections embraced in the law. One, in comparison to the rest, may be denominated the least of the commandments; and another, the greatest of all; but the same authority ordained and guards the one that ordained and guards the other, and the whole of this authority is dishonored by a violation of either. The attitude of the transgressor is that of resistance, not merely to a particular rule, but to the authority on which that rule rests; that is to say, to the whole authority which pervades the law. It may not be in his heart to murder, or to steal, or to bear false witness, but it may be to profane the Sabbath, or to dishonor his parents, or to covet. At one of the points he proposes to make an aggression on the law, and flatters himself, perhaps, that by violating the least of the commandments, and leaving all the others inviolate, his offence will be one of slight magnitude, and possibly wholly atoned for by the respect he shows for the more important precepts. But let us consider, for a moment, what the man proposes to do. The law prohibiting profane swearing, or enforcing the observance of the Sabbath, or requiring obedience to parents, is set before him; but it suits his convenience to violate one of these ordinances. It is only one out of many; the duty it enjoins is of far less importance to society than the duty enforced in either of the other parts of the code, and, at any rate, he means that all the

rest shall be honored. He, knowingly and deliberately, proposes to break one commandment. But the Lord God of heaven and earth ordained this one commandment; He it was that said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy;" "Honor thy father and thy mother." He sanctions each of these precepts with all the authority he has. For the time being he withdraws it, so to speak, from every other part of his law, and concentrates it in all its purity and with all its terribleness on this one statute. But the daring man is not overawed; he adheres to his purpose and the deed is done. And what deed is done? That one precept alone broken, and all the rest of the law left inviolate, and the high authority on which it rests, respected and honored? No man believes this. The law itself is a wreck, so far as one deed can make it so; every part of it is as much dishonored as this particular statute, for the authority of the whole,—that without which no part of it is binding,—has been set at nought and contemned. This is what the sinner does who assails the law of God in whatever part. At whatever point it enters, his weapon reaches the seat of life, and every member trembles alike from the wound inflicted.

II. The spirit and intent which pervades the whole law is one. Every law has an end, and this end constitutes the reason of the law; and is the same in all the parts of it, whether those parts are more or less numerous. The end which the law of God seeks, is the prevalence of perfect holiness in the moral world. This is the reason of that divine law which is inscribed on the heart of every rational being, and which has been put on record by the pen of the Holy Ghost. This law embraces various precepts and prohibitions; but they all

look to one end, and they are all necessary in securing that end. God would have all the subjects of this law holy, and holy "without spot or blemish;" and hence, the one spirit that pervades it all is expressed in the divine words, "be ye holy, for I am holy;" "be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." This end is not attained so long as one of the precepts of the law is disregarded, for the same spirit pervades and animates them all alike. The law has its life as well as the human body, and this life is one, undivided and indivisible. It is everywhere present, as it is in the members of the living, healthy body, making every part a living organ of itself. And if neither the hand nor the foot can be wounded without causing pain to the whole body and diffusing it through every member, so neither can a tittle of the law be injured without communicating the injury to the whole fabric. Again, as no member of the body can be amputated without leaving the whole more or less disabled, so neither can the least commandment of the law be removed without defeating the intent of the whole; it cannot be dishonored without offending the spirit of the whole. He who proposes this dishonor proposes no less than to resist the wisdom and benevolence of the Lawgiver, and if possible to defeat the same. His design is to circumscribe the end which the law contemplates, and to make the world less holy and less happy than the spirit of the law seeks to make it. He may limit his intention to a single precept of the law and fancy that he has a respect for each and all of the other precepts; but he forgets that the respect due to the whole is only that which is due to each of its parts. The spirit of the whole is concentrated at every point where aggression is meditated; at each of these points it confronts the aggressor, and when

the deed is perpetrated, it is with an insult to itself, not a whit less than if the whole law had been crushed by the blow.

III. The language used to express sin and the penalty due to it, pre-supposes a unity in the law, and hence, that the whole suffers by a violation of one of its parts. Sin is defined to be "a transgression of the law." This language implies that the whole law is transgressed, that is, in the authority and spirit of the whole; albeit only some particular precept is formally violated. It may be that the name of the Lord is taken in vain; or that the Sabbath day is not kept holy; or that parents are not honored; still in each case sin is committed, and where there is sin there is a transgression of the law, — not of some part of the law, but of the law, — the whole law. But the original of the phrase we have quoted is still stronger to our purpose. Sin is "lawlessness," is a more exact translation of the words; it is a disregard of the whole law, and of all law. The transgressor is one who pursues his own interest and inclination as though there were no law to restrain him. Law has no hold on his affections; it exerts little or no control over his will or lawless desires. He sins, indeed, if he only covets his neighbor's goods, or bears false witness, or steals and defrauds; but he sins in these acts because he sets at nought the whole law of God, and exhibits a law-resisting spirit.

And moreover, when the Scriptures speak of the penalty which the sinner incurs, it is one penalty, and this the penalty of the whole law. Indeed, it is noticeable that we do not read of different penalties in kind annexed to different acts of transgression, but the same is denounced against all, and that in the whole weight of the violated law. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” “The wages of sin is death.” “He will turn the wicked into hell.” These are the terms which the Scriptures employ to express the deserts of the sinner and the punishment to which he is held liable. Every case of transgression is regarded as a breach of the whole law of God; a contempt of the infinite authority of God, and an indication of a law-contemning spirit; and hence, one penalty is set over against it, whatever may be the particular precept which has been violated. It is not the sixth, seventh, or eighth commandment alone that the man has to answer to, who murders, or commits adultery, or steals; he must consider what he shall answer at the tribunal of the whole law which has been trampled on, and how he shall sustain the rebuke of that high authority which, in all its extent, he has insulted.

But enough has been said, I must think, to exhibit the justness of the principle laid down in our text, that whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. I proceed now, as was proposed, to some practical reflections.

1. Sin consists essentially in the state of the heart, otherwise it is not easy to apprehend the truth that a breach of one commandment is virtually a breach of all the other commandments, and a sin against the whole law. Profaning the Sabbath and stealing another man's goods, considered as overt acts, have no perceptible affinity to each other; and it is not easy to perceive why the commission of the first sin may not be consistent with strict integrity towards our fellow men. The man who will bear false witness to the injury of his neighbor may, so far as outward appearance is regarded, be a pattern of filial respect and dutifulness. But when we

come to trace all these separate and disconnected acts up to their common source, the heart, and reflect that these acts derive their moral character from the fountain whence they issue, we cease to find difficulty in the doctrine recognized in our text. We now find that all wrong acts take their rise in one lawless spirit,—a spirit whose evil nature consists in its opposition to law. It is prepared to cast off all wholesome restraints, and to gratify its own appetites and passions by the violation of any prohibition which the law enjoins. At one time it may feel the force of an appetite more strongly than anything else, and then it will resist the law which prohibits that indulgence. At another, it may be swayed by the passion of covetousness or revenge, and then it will trample down the law which says, “thou shalt not covet,” “thou shalt not kill.” There is a unity in sin, no less than in the law of which it is a violation. This unity is found in the law-resisting, law-contemning spirit which reigns in the children of disobedience. Here is the origin of all the sin there is in men. It is found in a heart that is not right with God; a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; a heart which is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Its want of subjection to law is the evidence of its enmity, nay, its enmity consists in this. “For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness;” all these things “come from within, and defile the man.”

2. Our subject suggests to every one the thought, that in reality we may be the subjects of far deeper sinfulness than we have ever suspected. In estimating their

own character and deserts, men are liable to be led into a great mistake from the methods they adopt in making out their conclusions. The tendency with all is to conceive of sin as attaching to overt acts; and hence they limit their inquiries mainly, to their outward lives. Now, if a man has been openly and shamefully vicious in his life and habits,—a Sabbath-breaker and profane man; disobedient to parents; delighting in scenes of impurity and broils and fightings; a thief or a liar,—he will find enough in what he has said and done to fill him with shame and terror in his moments of serious reflection. But all men cannot find the same record of themselves in their outward life. They cannot charge themselves with many acts of gross offence against the laws of virtue and morality. They have shunned the revels of the drunkard and the profane, and loathed the dwelling of her “whose feet go down to death and whose steps take hold on hell;” their intercourse with men has been marked by a high sense of probity and honor; they have cherished a frank and truthful and generous spirit in their own bosoms; they have revered the name and ordinances of God; and, with the young man in the gospel, they can say, almost in regard to the letter of the commandments, “All these have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?” Now it is evident, that by prosecuting this course of inquiry there is danger that many will fail of arriving at a just sense of their deserts, and when addressed in those terms of scripture which apply to all, and set forth the utter sinfulness of all, they will find no corresponding response in their own consciousness. But these same moral and virtuous persons will not claim for themselves an entire exemption from sin. They all confess to the charge that they are sinners, They remember the evil thoughts they have cherished,

yea, the hard thoughts against God they have indulged, and the countless neglects of duty of which they have been guilty. Even these amiable and generous-hearted persons are free to confess that they have not given their hearts to God; that they have been rebellious under his appointments; that they have been impatient under his restraints. Yea, that they have loved the creature instead of God, who is over all. And now let such consider in what condition these confessions place them. They only show that what is true of others is true also of themselves; that they belong to the race of the children of disobedience, and are by nature children of wrath, even as others. Nature or education has imposed more restraints on them than on many others, and hence, they have not plunged like others into "the pollutions of the world." But sin, we have seen, is essentially a thing of the heart; and hence, it may exist in all its malignity and power while the outward life is comparatively pure. It may beget in the heart that feeling of self-righteousness which shields the conscience from the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It may render the sinner more stout-hearted, and remove him far from the righteousness of God, keeping him in a state of false security, even while those who are more daring in sin are arrested in their course and brought back to God by repentance. It may serve to blind and flatter the soul in a neglect of its own eternal interest, till sudden destruction overtake them as a thief in the night, and they shall not escape. We would be far from disparaging the moral virtues; we honor them, and we admire the man who has passed along the polluting ways of the world and preserved himself from their contamination. Our Saviour himself admired them; and when he saw the young man clothed and adorned with them,



“he loved him!” But moral virtues must not be mistaken for the graces of the Spirit, nor the source of them be confounded with a new heart. The virtuous man, like the youth in the gospel, may be still under the dominion of a heart that is in rebellion against God; his heart may cherish a law-resisting spirit. He may recognize, in truth, no God but himself. He may not have one feeling of esteem for the infinitely holy God; not one emotion of true gratitude for the countless mercies that are poured forth upon him; not one emotion of heart-felt joy that God reigns. When his interests or his pleasures come in conflict with God’s will, he may stoutly resist and fearlessly rebel. When all the authority of God’s law is set before him as concentrated in one point of that law, and the divine power and wrath are arrayed to deter him from transgression, he may coolly and contemptuously place his foot on that authority, and recklessly defy the power that can crush him in a moment. All this he may do consistently with the virtues that adorn his outward life, and for which he is admired and applauded by all. Nay more, all this he actually does in every instance in which he knowingly and deliberately refuses or neglects conformity to the law of God. And now, let me ask, has such a man any reason to be proud of himself before God, or to look upon himself with a flattering and complacent eye? Is there not matter enough in his own bosom to fill him with shame and self-loathing; enough to alarm him with apprehensions of coming wrath and constrain him to ask with all earnestness, “men and brethren, what shall I do?”

3. Our subject serves to throw some light on what is termed the doctrine of total moral depravity. The advocates of this doctrine, or of the doctrine which

bears this title, do not admit it as a fact of their representation that men by nature are necessarily as wicked as they can be; or that there is no progress in sin from a bad state to one that is still worse, or even that every act of a man's life is unavoidably and intrinsically sinful. They assert only that man's depravity by nature is without any mixture of what is morally good in the sight of God; it is a sinfulness that is unalleviated, unredeemed by its opposite, which is not moral virtue, but true holiness. This doctrine neither asserts nor implies that the unrenewed man is constantly repeating acts of conscious and deliberate sin; or that any number of distinct acts of transgression is required in evidence that he is a totally depraved man. The advocates of this doctrine look only at the habitual moral aspect of the heart; they contemplate only the position which it maintains to the law of God. Does the heart delight in the spirit of this law? Does it approve of its appointments, because they are holy, just, and good? Does it bow to the authority that sanctions it, and cheerfully forego its own preferences and selfish ends when they come in conflict with this law? Surely, the apostle thought not so when he said, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Nor when he said again, in the words of the Psalmist, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The heart of the unrenewed man, as it regards God, is in a lawless state. It resists the law, and violates its precepts whenever they come in competition with its unholy desires and selfish interests. Now, it is this aspect of the heart towards God and his

law in which man's sinfulness essentially and mainly consists. Its spirit is habitually and unrelentingly hostile to the holy law of God. It has no seasons in which this hostility softens and relents; no moments when it bows cheerfully to its authority, and finds its happiness in unreserved submission and obedience. And why may not such a state be denominated exclusive? It holds its place against all that would overcome it. And why may not such depravity, if it is depravity at all, be styled total? What redeeming admixture is there in it? What needs to be added to make it utterly wrong and odious in the sight of God?

4. We learn what constitutes conviction of sin. This phrase, we are aware, is often objected to, as savoring of fanaticism, and because infidels and the enemies of evangelical religion have found it easy to turn it into ridicule. And if a word or phrase is to be abandoned for this reason, it is doubtful whether any terms will be left us by which to express either the peculiar doctrines of Christianity or the workings of grace in the heart. It is conceded on all sides that one may be a sinner and yet not have those apprehensions of himself and of his deserts which such a fact would seem adapted to awaken. In other words, there may be sin without the knowledge of sin. The knowledge of sin as belonging to us, a feeling that we are guilty and are liable to the penalty of the law we have broken, is what is generally understood by the phrase "conviction of sin." It arises in the mind according to the same process by which other feelings arise. It is the result of reflection. Time may banish from the mind the remembrance of a friend we have lost, or of an injury we have received, or of a wrong we have inflicted on another; but reflection revives the remembrance, and restores the feeling in its

original freshness. But sin may be committed without any perceptible feeling of regret and sorrow at the time; and hence it requires a greater effort of the mind to recall the offences of our past lives, and impress the heart with the guilt and danger that adhere to them. Now it is this impression concerning our sinfulness and deserts that we call "conviction of sin." But this is not necessarily a remembrance of all our sins, or even of many particular sins unusually heinous in their character. It is rather an apprehension of our sinful state, a consciousness that our hearts are not right with God. It looks more at the present than at the past. We see the claims of God upon us in his law, and we feel that these claims are resisted in our hearts; yea, there may be an overwhelming conviction of sin, and yet our thoughts be looking intently on what is now passing within us, without a single glance at the past, without reverting even to any particular sins we have committed. We feel that we are now unreconciled to God; we have no complacency in his holiness; no delight in his law; no desire to glorify him in our bodies and spirits which are his. We feel the spirit of resistance, of enmity, of ingratitude and disobedience at work in our hearts. We know it is wrong; we know it is dangerous to indulge it; we struggle against it; still it is there. We strive to overcome it by the force of motives; we think of the love and benevolence of God towards us; we call to remembrance the wrath that is in store for the rebel; still the heart is hard and relentless. Fellow-sinner, is this intelligible language to your ear? Have you ever felt this resistance to God and duty; this striving and warring within? Then you may have had some knowledge of sin; yea, have felt its evil and condemning power. But without this, though you may have num-

bered up ten thousand transgressions in your past life, and trembled in your inmost soul at the wrath to come, still you have had but a feeble sense of your sinfulness, and of the great change you must experience before you can see the kingdom of God.

5. From what has been said, we are prepared to apprehend the nature and necessity of regeneration. It is that great work of the Holy Spirit by which the heart of the sinner is reclaimed to the dominion of the law of God. The disobedient, lawless spirit of man is made willing in the day of God's power. Instead of resisting, it sweetly coincides with the will of God, bows in filial submission to His authority, and finds "delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man." This, in the language of Jesus, is "being born again." It is the soul receiving into itself a principle of obedience to each and every part of the law, because each and every part is holy, just, and good, and bears the authority of God upon it. And who can for a moment doubt the necessity of such a change? How can a law-resisting, law-contemning spirit, be approved of God? How can a rebel be received into heaven, or how made happy under a law which requires the obedience of every thought of the heart, but from which the whole soul steadfastly and unceasingly revolts? Marvel not, then, O man, when it is said unto thee, "ye must be born again." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

## SERMON X.

### THE GOSPEL TRUE TO THE MORAL CONVICTIONS OF MEN.

“AND AS HE REASONED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGMENT TO COME, FELIX TREMBLED, AND ANSWERED, GO THY WAY FOR THIS TIME; WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON I WILL CALL FOR THEE.”— *Acts* xxiv. 25.<sup>1</sup>

THE scene here recorded transpired in the palace of the Roman governor of Judea ; Paul, the apostle, who had been accused of being a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, — who had, also, gone about to profane the temple, — was arraigned for trial. Felix, whose private life was marked by the most infamous vices, and whose public administration was rendered odious by oppression and rapacity, sat as the presiding judge. The prisoner was commanded to speak ; first, concerning his religious tenets, “ the faith in Christ,” which he preached. But the singular character of his defence on this occasion, so foreign, seemingly, to the point in hand, if not impertinent to such an imposing assembly, and to the momentous interests at stake, can hardly escape the observation of any one. Instead of an apology, the court is required to

listen to a sermon. In the place of a calm and studied exposition of the creed which he promulgated, we listen only to an unreserved and fearless exposure of the vices and crimes of the judge; a pointed and earnest application of truth to his conscience, enforced by the most solemn appeals to the coming day of retribution. The speaker seems to have forgotten that he was a helpless prisoner before a vindictive tribunal, and to think of himself only as the apostle of Jesus Christ, dispensing the terrors of the Lord and the word of reconciliation. His own personal safety appears to be lost sight of in his zeal to reclaim this high offender against the laws of God, and to impart to him the salvation which is provided for sinners.

Another circumstance, moreover, will hardly escape the notice of the reader, in the singular character of this defence. This eminent servant of Jesus has been sometimes accused of compromising the temporal rights of men in his zeal to preserve the tranquillity of the church, or to promote the salvation of souls. But the seeming inconsistency disappears, when we consider that it was the method of this apostle to adapt his instructions to those whom he addressed. If he addressed men as subjects of law, he pointed out their duties in this relation, rather than sought to inflame their passions against those who oppressed and injured them. If we would understand, then, the true spirit of the man, and learn with what feelings he regarded the proud and imperious oppressors of their race, we must follow him into the presence of such men, and listen to the truths with which he entertains them. It is on such an occasion that he is presented before us in our text. He is cited on a criminal prosecution, and his present concern is, as the alleged "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,"

to state and defend the doctrines which he preached. But he seems to forget that his liberty and life are at stake. He thinks only of the man before him; of the vices that have disgraced him, and of the crimes that have rendered him odious to God and to man. He remembers his habits of licentiousness and excess, the wretchedness and ruin he has sent into the domestic circle, the wrongs which his rapacity has inflicted on individuals, and the sighs and groans which his oppressions had wrung from the hearts of a nation; and though he sits before him enrobed in purple, and surrounded with his cohorts, and armed with the authority of the Cæsars, yet all this cannot protect him from the rebuke which he deserves. Here, as on other occasions, the apostle proclaims the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time skilfully adapts it to the character of his audience. He spares neither the man nor his sins. He expounds to him the law of God, rather than "the faith in Christ." He rehearses to him his unrighteous acts and beastly practices, and scourges his guilty soul as with a whip of scorpions. Such is Paul in the presence of voluptuaries and tyrants. He uncovers all their sins and sets them in order before their eyes. He brings them near to the judgment-seat of a just and avenging God, and, in the midst of all their pride and power, makes them quail at the thought of retribution. "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

In farther directing your minds to some of the practical uses to be made of the incident recorded in the text, I remark,

I. That the most successful method of imparting a knowledge of divine truth to the human understanding, is to present it under its various adaptation to the per-



sons and circumstances of the inquirers. There was more of profound sagacity and of a master's skill concealed in the defence of Paul at the bar of Felix, than at first appears. While he seems to lose sight of what concerned him most,—a defence of the doctrine of Christ,—and to be hazarding the success of his own cause in his eagerness to save the soul of his judge, he is in reality pursuing his proper object in the most direct path, and with the most certain prospect of success. His own observation had taught him how little sympathy existed in a depraved, sensual mind for the Christian religion, regarded as a system of abstract truths; and, hence, that he might discourse the day out in the spirit and style of a philosopher, on the reasonableness and harmony and benevolence of the truths comprised in the Christian system, and leave at the end but a slight impression on the minds of his audience; on the sin-hardened soul of his judge, or on the prejudiced and embittered minds of his accusers, the Jews, these abstractions of the “faith in Christ” would be utterly powerless, like the rays of a wintry sun on fields of ice. Hence, instead of amusing their understandings, he sought to enlist their feelings in the things he uttered. In the place of brandishing his sword before them, that their eyes might be dazzled with the splendor of its blade or the richness of its mounting, he chose so to use it that they might prove both the excellence of its temper and the keenness of its edge. He aimed to establish the truthfulness of his doctrine from its adapt-  
edness to the state and character of those whom it professedly concerned. It was a testimony; and the business of the apostle was to show that this testimony was according to truth; and how could he more effectually accomplish this than by the method which he

adopted? In the unblemished purity of God's righteousness, as set forth in his Word, he bids his audience contemplate, as in a mirror, their own characters and deserts. Placing his hand on the law of God, "he reasons of equity, justice, and truth, of sobriety and chastity; and then, raising his eyes to him on whose will the issues of that day were suspended, and in whose public and private life every precept of that law had been broken and insulted, he discourses of that dreadful day when, according to 'the faith in Christ,' every man must give account of himself to God."

Such was the method by which Paul was accustomed to vindicate his cause at the tribunal of man. Others might define and explain; talk of fitness and consistency; pile argument on argument in defence of their position; but Paul bore the naked truth home, as a testimony, to the "business and bosoms of men," and compelled the sensual Roman and the false-hearted Jew to believe it, from the simple fact that it testified truly of them and their deeds.

II. Men are seldom found so depraved and reprobate as to have lost all susceptibility to the power of gospel truth. Men have existed, and still exist, who seem to have sounded all the depths of practical iniquity and vice, to have fallen below the brute in their beastly appetites and pleasures, and to have reached apparently the level of demons in their corrupt and malignant passions; nevertheless, they have not been able to obliterate from the soul the sensibility to right and wrong, to holiness and sin, and to the retributions of eternity. Such a man we discover in him who sat on the tribunal before which Paul was arraigned. Closely allied by marriage to Mark Antony and Cleopatra, of Egypt, whose infamous deeds, set off by their high personal and princely accomplish-

ments, have given their names a preëminence in the annals of impurity; educated in the camps or court of Rome at a time when, as its own historian has said, the people could neither "endure their vices, nor the remedies provided for them;" familiar from his youth with all scenes of corruption, rapacity, and cruelty; having seduced from her husband the very woman who now sits by his side, and from whose mind the light of pure, divine truth was excluded, Felix might be expected to furnish the instance, if one existed, of a mind from which all sensibility to religious sentiment had been obliterated. But, even in his case, the example is not furnished us. Paul verily believed that, buried beneath the depths of darkness and depravity in the mind of this man even, there was an oracle that would answer when questioned by the voice of truth; a judgment-seat from which a righteous sentence would be uttered, and in peals of thunder, could his voice for once be made to reach it. And it is at the door of that oracle, and before that unseen tribunal, and not before the mere understanding of his judges, that he presents himself in defence of the "truth as it is in Jesus." "He reasons of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," where the import of such language can be apprehended and its power felt. His practised finger touches chords which were never reached before, and they vibrate under the genial pressure. He pours light into recesses where, possibly, a beam from heaven never shone before; and a scroll is illuminated which no art or device of man inscribed; a handwriting becomes legible on the wall, as when the palace at Babylon resounded with the nightly revel, and the knees of him who looked thereon smote one against another. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix

trembled." We infer, then, that there is in the bosoms of men a sensibility to truth and duty which it is not easy to annihilate. We may neglect to cherish and to call it into use, and so, like a delicate instrument of music, it may in time seem to have become untuned, if not unstrung. We may account it a tormentor, and refuse to listen to it, or strive to stifle its voice; we may labor to corrupt its testimony by the seductions of gain or pleasure, or to smother its accusations under a load of vices and crimes; but can we hope to succeed where the monarch of Babylon, where the treacherous betrayer of his Lord, where the Governor of Judea, utterly failed? This sensibility may be suspended, perhaps, yea, "seared as with a red-hot iron," while the life of the organ is unaffected, as there may be a calm and silence in the sky, though the power of the storm and tornado is not annihilated. Think not, then, O sinner that conscience—a neglected and abused conscience—is only a phantasm in the brain of a frenzied maniac; that because all at present is quiet and peaceful in your bosom, there is no reason to apprehend that it will ever be otherwise. The thunders of heaven are now asleep, as well as those in the guilty heart of man; and as sure as the one will reverberate again through the skies, so surely will the other cause your soul to tremble, when it shall please God to reveal to you his righteous judgments.

III. Under the convictions of an awakened conscience, sinners become truly concerned for the safety of their souls, and hence, are prepared to listen to those teachings which it is the aim of the gospel to impart. King Agrippa manifested this concern for himself when Paul proclaimed at the foot of his throne and amidst the imposing array of his court, "That men should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Felix, too, the miserable offender, and destined to a miserable end, indicated this concern for himself, not only in the agitation which he betrayed to all present, but in the remarks which subsequently fell from his lips. His remorse of conscience awakened an apprehension, a terror of mind which he could control only by arresting the speaker, or bidding the assembly to disperse, or by occupying his mind with themes of a more congenial character. He felt deeply that his soul was in danger, and flattered himself that his eternal interests should not be neglected as they had been. It was his full intention to hear his prisoner again on this matter, and when he bade him go his way for that time, he assured him that at a convenient day he would call for him again. And he was true to his promise; for it is recorded in the next verse, “that he sent for him often, and communed with him.” And in all cases a conscience quickened to a sense of sin and ill-desert awakens in the sinner a concern for the safety of his soul. He feels that he has neglected an infinitely important interest, and that it is not safe to leave it in future, as he has done heretofore, entirely out of his plans and calculations. He is convinced that he deserves evil and not good at the hand of God, and feels a sad premonition that if death should suddenly arrest his steps his soul would perish. Thus far, the case of any awakened sinner resembles that of Felix, and in too many instances the resemblance goes still further. Felix firmly resolved to do something for himself; but the present was not the time or this the place for doing it. He interrupted the exertions of the man who was effectually aiding him in the work of salvation; and though he professedly did it only that he might find a better place

and a more convenient time, still it was enough to provoke the Holy Spirit to depart from him. Again and again he summoned the man of God into his presence and communed with him; but it was always with a diminished interest in the things of the kingdom. At last, he could not only hear him with indifference, but even had the audacity to intimate to his prisoner that he was only waiting for a bribe to release him. Thus vanished those convictions of the mind which for a time were insupportable; in an end so miserable and hopeless terminated what seemed to be an honest and firm resolve to attend to the things which belonged to his peace. "He returned like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

And how many souls have been betrayed by the teaching of their own hearts into an imitation of this sad example? God's Spirit has awakened the sensibility of their minds to the truth; they are quickened to a sense of their unworthiness and danger, and have fully resolved to attend to the things that belong to their peace. But, like the unwary Felix, they think it reasonable and safe to take their own time for it. The truth presses heavily on their consciences; the man of God is urgent with them, saying, "now is the accepted time;" but they reply, it is not "the convenient time, wherefore go thy way for the present." Here is the reef, the concealed, treacherous rock, on which the hopes of multitudes have perished. O, when will dying sinners be made to understand and believe that the accepted time is everything, and that the convenient time, nothing. That the one is now, and possibly may never be again; and that the other, without this, though it may return a thousand times, will find us and leave us in the

way to death. When thou sayest, O man, "Go thy way for this time," thy words may be interpreted on high to mean, "Go thy way for once and forever!" It is dangerous to trifle with the long-suffering of God. "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

## SERMON XI.

### RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS RESISTED.

"NEVERTHELESS, AMONG THE CHIEF RULERS ALSO MANY BELIEVED ON HIM; BUT BECAUSE OF THE PHARISEES THEY DID NOT CONFESS HIM, LEST THEY SHOULD BE PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE; FOR THEY LOVED THE PRAISE OF MEN MORE THAN THE PRAISE OF GOD." — *John xii. 42, 43.*<sup>1</sup>

ON a certain occasion it was tauntingly asked by the opponents of Jesus and his doctrine, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" It was conceived to be an argument of great weight against the new religion that it acquired proselytes chiefly from the common people, the unlearned, and credulous; while the upper class, embracing the most enlightened and discriminating minds, and such, of course, as were best fitted to judge of its claims on human belief, were nearly uniform in rejecting it. This mode of reasoning, doubtless, would have been less exceptionable had Christianity been propounded only in the form of abstract truths, and in technical phraseology; but nothing, surely, could be more objectionable as a test of truths that rested on the testimony of sense, or appealed to the spiritual experience of every man. But, moreover, if the rule adopted by these zealous adversaries of Christ is at all admissible, it should be received in its fullest extent. If the judgment of learned



and influential men has any authority in deciding on the claims of the religion of Jesus, then it has authority in favor of its claims as well as against them. If we are to reject the Christian doctrine because such men reject it, then, clearly, it is a reason for our embracing it that they have set us the example.

Now we are informed in the text that the gospel did actually commend itself to be the power of God to not a few of this exalted class in society. The "chief rulers" were members of the Jewish senate, or princes of the state. They belonged to the highest class in society; they were educated and experienced men, superior, we may suppose, to vulgar credulity and to the arts of a cunning impostor. These men, moreover, were strongly prejudiced in favor of the old religion. Their early associations, their political connections, their personal friendship, their worldly interests, would only serve to fortify their minds against all change in their religious belief. These powerful obstructions must all yield to the force of evidence before they could receive the doctrine that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God. The difference in this case between adherence to the old religion and assenting to the new, was like that between a body at rest and the same body put in motion. Serious impediments must be overcome which would require the force of clear and irresistible evidence. If, then, the adherence of men of this class to the old religion was evidence of its truth and obligation, much more might their renunciation of it, and their adoption of a new system be urged in evidence of the truth of the new. Now it is said in the text, that "among the chief rulers also many believed on him." The disciples of Christ were not, in his day, confined to the ignorant and depressed classes in society; they were found also among the most enlightened and

avored class. His doctrine found its way into every class, and forced a conviction of its truth upon minds that were most strongly fortified against it. And the weight of the example adduced in the text, is not materially lessened by the qualifying remark that follows: "but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue." The inconsistency betrayed in the conduct of these men did not neutralize their testimony in favor of Christ and his doctrine; their conduct might be at variance with their convictions, still their convictions were in harmony with the doctrines and claims of Christ. They could not resist the evidence which his miracles and life furnished of his Messiahship, nor stifle the response which their consciences gave to the truth of his doctrine; although counter influences, for the time being, might have restrained them from acting in accordance with their inward convictions. These convictions were in favor of the truth, while their conduct, in declining to confess Christ, only proves that men may know their duty and still neglect to do it. These rulers stood in fear of the Pharisees, — a powerful sect in the Jewish church, — and the most bitter and unrelenting enemies and persecutors of Christ. To espouse openly the cause of the Nazarene was to draw down upon their own heads the wrath and power of this controlling body. To escape the infamy of excommunication, to which an avowal of their convictions would expose them, they deemed it prudent to bury these convictions in their own bosoms, or to express them only in a private and confidential manner. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

But, aside from the testimony which it furnishes in favor of the gospel doctrine, — testimony of men fully

competent to judge of its merits, and whose judgment, if biased at all, was biased against it, — aside from this, the text is highly instructive and admonitory in the truth which it offers to the mind. It furnishes an instance of men resisting the religious convictions of their minds. The chief rulers of the Jews had no worldly interest to be advanced by lending a favorable ear to the pretensions of Jesus ; on the other hand, they put in jeopardy all such interests by adopting this course. When, then, it is said that many of them believed on Jesus, we must suppose that they yielded to the force of evidence, and not to the dictates of worldly policy. The miracles which Christ performed were so unquestionable, so varied and stupendous, that their reason could not avoid the conclusion to which they led, — that Jesus was a teacher come from God. And, moreover, the doctrines which he promulgated, and which they heard from his own lips, were so exactly in accordance with their own experience ; so much in harmony with that law which is written on the hearts of men ; so adapted to the wants and miseries of our present state, and so full of grace and love, that they were constrained to admit that they were clothed with divine authority and power. So far, at least, they believed. But here their course was arrested. Those convictions which are felt to have supreme authority for the mind, and to which the whole man is bound to yield prompt and unreserved obedience, they resisted, or, at least, did not accompany them with an honest and manly avowal. The truth had taken too firm a hold on their understanding and conscience to be shaken off ; but, still, for some cause, they did not openly espouse it. In Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Pharisees scorned and rejected, they beheld the Christ of God, — him who was born King of the Jews, the long expected

Messiah, the hope of God's people, Israel, — yet they gave no sign of recognition, they uttered no exclamation of joy and gratitude, that the Desire of all nations had come. They strove to suppress their convictions, or cherished them in silence, and carried themselves among their associates as those who had no part or interest in the matter. "Many of the chief rulers believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Here the secret influence which held them spell-bound, and directed their course, is brought out. Worldly considerations prevailed against the convictions of duty. They were influenced more by the opinions of men, by regard to their reputation, their ease, and worldly prosperity and happiness, than by the approbation and favor of God.

And this example is recorded for the admonition and warning of those who should come after; it is held up as a mirror in which multitudes of all ages, under the gospel, may contemplate themselves. In appropriating, then, the words before us to our own use, let us consider, —

I. Those convictions of truth and duty which the gospel awakens in the minds of those to whom it is familiar. There is, doubtless, a popular sense in which the word *believe* is used, that is far short of that life-giving, saving power which is generally indicated by the word as used in the gospel. Men are said to believe when their minds are under the influence of such evidence as creates a conviction. Such a conviction existed in the minds of the chief rulers indicated in the text. They believed on Christ in the sense that they had no reasonable doubt that he was the true Messiah,

sent of God to be the teacher and Saviour of men. They believed in the reality of his miracles, and admitted them to be an ample confirmation of his divine mission. They believed him to be an innocent man, though others traduced him; that he was a holy and harmless man, honestly intent on doing good, and that the treatment he received from his opposers was nothing short of persecution endured for righteousness' sake. They saw nothing fanatical or unreasonable in his teachings, but acknowledged that they accorded with truth and soberness; that they were fitted to instruct, to reprove, and to reform, and to make the doers thereof perfect. In such a sense, and to such an extent, at least, did they believe. The truth shone on their minds with such clearness and power as to constrain their judgment and their conscience to acknowledge and approve of it. They had no longer the plea of ignorance to justify or palliate their indifference or neutrality. They were carried forward to that limit in moral agency from which they could not recede, and where they could not stop but with the greatest guilt and peril to their souls. Knowledge in moral subjects becomes an instant and paramount duty. When truth and right are discussed, they are to be espoused both for our own sakes and for the sake of others. Hence, to believe and not to confess is rebellion against the authority of the truth; an attempt to quench the light of heaven that has entered the mind; a resistance offered to the most sacred convictions of which the conscience and heart of man is susceptible. And what multitudes of men are in the same position in regard to the great truths of the gospel, as is here described! They have no rational doubt of the truth of the Christian scriptures, they have as unqualified a belief in them as they have in anything which is not seen and

temporal. They have been educated in this belief; it has been nurtured in them by the force of example, and by a frequent and almost daily recurrence to this divine book. They have no more doubt that Jesus was a teacher and Saviour come from God,—that he wrought miracles, suffered on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven,—than of any historical event in past time. They believe in the doctrine he inculcated, that men are in a fallen and ruined condition, and that through his blood only can they be delivered from the consequences of their sins; that he has made an atonement sufficient for the sins of all, and that each man is at liberty to come himself, and is bound to encourage all others to come with him, and embrace the great salvation. These are the convictions that have been formed in the minds of the great majority of those who live under the light of the gospel. They believe on Christ in the sense we have described the rulers of the Jews as believing on him. They yield their full assent to the system which he taught. They have that knowledge within them which is identified with duty. They have passed the limits within which ignorance may be urged in extenuation of neglect. They have reached a point where they cannot pause for a moment but at the hazard of their souls;—they have a belief which must lead them on to obedience, or they stand without excuse before God.

II. We inquire, what we are to understand by confessing Christ? When it is said of the chief rulers who believed on Christ, that they did not confess him, we are to understand, doubtless, that they neglected something that is essential in order to become a true disciple of Jesus.

We have seen that the belief attributed to them in-

volved certain strong convictions of the conscience and understanding, that the doctrines which Christ promulgated were true, and consequently that it was the duty of all men to submit to the gospel as a rule of life, as well as to embrace it as the means of salvation. Now what can be meant by confessing Christ but to yield to the force of these convictions, and to follow them out in our life to the full extent to which they may lead? In other words, that we obey that gospel, the truth and divine authority of which we have been constrained to admit in our inmost souls. We may have no doubt of the truth that Christ is an adequate and willing Saviour, that he will not fail to save all who come to him in the prescribed way; but do we confess him, so long as we ourselves do not come to him in this way, and actually appropriate his salvation, by faith, to ourselves? We may believe that Christ is the rightful sovereign of men; that to him every knee ought to bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; but until our souls do thus submit to and own him as our Lord, do we in any proper sense confess him? We may believe there is salvation in none other, because "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;" still, until we are constrained actually to inscribe his name on our hearts, as all our desire and all our salvation, we do not confess him. We may admit that Christ's cause is the cause of truth and righteousness; but we do truly confess him only as we identify ourselves with that cause, openly avow it, steadfastly adhere to it through evil and through good report, and strive to augment its influence and power among men by all the aid which our name, our example, our exertions may constitute. We confess Christ by putting ourselves by the side of Christ in rela-

tion to his truth and his cause, and doing for its promulgation and advancement, as we have him for an example. Now, in this sense, the chief rulers who believed did not confess Christ. They did not follow out their convictions as far as those convictions would have led them if they had followed them at all. They did not take Christ to be their pattern and do as he did, openly espousing the cause of God's truth and of the world's salvation, and lending to it the support and aid of their influence and best exertions. Knowing in their hearts that the cause was a just and holy one, and possibly wishing it success, they held it prudent, under the threatening aspect of those times, not to expose themselves to disgrace and persecution by an avowed alliance with it. And what multitudes, with the full light of the gospel blazing on their minds, and with such convictions of their duty as leave no room for doubt, are imitating and even surpassing the example which is here set before us? Probably there is not an impenitent soul present who is not chargeable with the inconsistency and guilt here exhibited. The convictions of all are in harmony with the teachings of Christ: they believe themselves to be sinners; they know they are in danger of hell; they are sure that the kingdom of God is come nigh to them, and that Christ is willing and able to save them. They have no doubts on these points, and neither do they doubt that their case is full of peril, "for man knoweth not his time." Still, Christ is not confessed by them; they do not embrace him as their Saviour, they do not take hold of the exceeding great and precious promises extended to them, and which are ratified by blood; they do not espouse his cause nor cast in their lot with him for their own and the world's salvation. With all the assurance they have, that to separate themselves from



Christ is to lose their own souls, they still say in their hearts, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Thus do they resist and, seemingly trifle with, the most solemn convictions of their minds, — convictions, perhaps, the strongest they will ever have in this world; convictions, certainly, that leave them without the excuse of ignorance; and "after their hard and impenitent hearts they treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath."

III. The text reveals the cause of that great neglect and sin which are so common to men: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." The cause here stated may seem, perhaps, not applicable to all cases that occur, or even to a majority of them; still the language admits of an interpretation that will embrace all those influences which the gospel has to encounter in the hearts of men. The Jewish rulers did not confess Christ, because of the odium and disgrace to which it would expose them. It would subject them to losses and trials; wealth, honor, ease, comfort, and friends, might all be sacrificed by confessing Christ at that day; yea, everything that depends upon the opinion and friendship of the world. Self and worldly interests deterred the rulers from confessing Christ; and what other reasons than these hinder the sinners of our day from coming to Christ and espousing the cause of truth and salvation? The world is the great opposing power which Christ and his gospel are sent to overcome. This power is predominant in the hearts of the children of disobedience, leading them captive at its will. It frowns and it flatters; it deludes with promises, or intimidates with threats, and so maintains its dominion over us. It cannot extinguish the convictions of duty that are impressed on our minds, or wholly blind us to our

true interests as accountable and immortal beings; but it teaches us to resist these convictions of our souls and to neglect the great salvation. And it is because we love the world more than we love God that we do not come to Christ that we may be saved. No man can serve two masters; we cannot love the world, and at the same time confess Christ; if we hold to the one, we despise the other. "Choose ye then this day whom you will serve; if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him."

## SERMON XII.

### A SAVING FAITH.

“AND WHEN HE WAS COME INTO THE HOUSE, THE BLIND MEN CAME TO HIM;  
AND JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, BELIEVE YE THAT I AM ABLE TO DO THIS?  
THEY SAID UNTO HIM, YEA LORD. THEN TOUCHED HE THEIR EYES, SAYING,  
ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH BE IT UNTO YOU.” — *Matt. ix. 28, 29.*

OUR Saviour, at the time alluded to in this narrative, was at Capernaum, a place which had been greatly privileged by his frequent visits and mighty works, and which, on account of his being so often there, is styled in the context “his own city.” This occasion had been distinguished by several important events. It was at this time that Matthew, a wealthy publican of that city, was called out of the custom-house, and added to the number of the apostles. The daughter of a certain ruler, also, who had died, was restored to life; a woman who had been diseased with an issue of blood twelve years was made whole; a man who had been possessed with a devil was delivered from the power of his tormentor, and finally, two blind men were restored to sight. These two men first accosted Christ as he was walking in the street, when they cried after him, saying, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.” Not receiving any notice from him in this public place, they followed him to the house where he had entered in, and there renewed

their request Jesus saith unto them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said unto him, "Yea, Lord." Then touched he their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it unto you." And their eyes were opened.

I. The first thing to be noticed in the text is the great calamity inflicted on these unhappy men. They were blind, totally blind, and blind, it would seem, from their birth. A greater privation, that is unaccompanied with positive suffering, rarely, if ever, befalls a human being. To him, day and night are all the same; form and color and proportion are all vaguely apprehended, if apprehended at all; the features of kindred and friends, the beauty of the fields, the glory of the heavens, are all to him as things that are not. No wonder that, under such a calamity, men should flee to Him who has power to give sight to the blind, and, with importunate entreaty, invoke his compassion and aid. But it is to be remembered that there is a blindness to the soul as well as to the body; a blindness no less total, no less calamitous, no less difficult to be removed; no less perilous to the eternal interests of the soul than the other is to the security and well-being of the outward man. Moreover, the blindness of the soul, unlike that of the body, is not a calamity of rare experience among men. It is not an evil with which here and there one only is afflicted, but an evil that is incident to all alike. Our Saviour described the Jews as those who had eyes but saw not; and the apostle represents the Gentiles as "walking in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." It is under the influence of this blindness that the gospel is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded

the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Owing to the darkness of their hearts is it, that their eyes have not seen, nor their ears heard, neither have entered into their hearts the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.

II. The next thing to be noticed in the text is the sure and all-sufficient remedy for the evil with which these men were afflicted. Among the achievements of modern art is numbered that of giving sight to one born blind. But it is to be acknowledged that this achievement is a very rare one; what nature has been pleased to withhold, the art of man can seldom supply. But in the days of our Saviour, it might strictly be said, that since the beginning of the world it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. But the blind men of Capernaum had found one who was competent to administer entire relief to their case. He could do it instantly; do it without causing them pain; do it so that it should not need to be done over again; do it without the least chance of a failure, however complicate or obstinate might be the nature of the disease. And he who could thus extend relief to the sightless eye, is sufficient also to remove the darkness of the natural heart. The outward miracle which he wrought in this case is proof of his skill and power to reach the inner man, and to make its deepest, darkest chamber "all light in the Lord." It was a part of the great commission of Christ to "open the eyes of our understanding," and "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" to them whom the god of this world had blinded. "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the

broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." To this Physician of the soul are the benighted sons of men directed for the cure of those maladies which afflict and consume the heart. He is a Physician, to be found, not at Capernaum, or in Jerusalem, but in every place where his presence is needed; on every dark mountain where benighted sinners wander and are liable to fall. He is an accessible Physician to all who need his aid and will apply for it. The blind men of Capernaum, when they accosted him in the streets, were repulsed, not through want of compassion in Christ, but because then he sought to avoid notoriety; but now, none are repulsed; none sent empty away; everywhere waiting; at all times ready; to the needy of all classes attentive and condescending; to every case alike competent,— is that Son of David, who was exalted to give repentance to Israel and to grant the remission of sins. His language, as when he stood on the crowded shores of the sea of Galilee, is, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

III. The next thing to be noticed in the text is the condition on which the blind men were taught to expect relief. "Jesus saith unto them, believe ye that I am able to do this?" Here is the condition, and the terms employed indicate, most plainly, that in the absence of this persuasion on their part no relief was to be expected. Christ undoubtedly knew whether they had faith to be healed; but it must be a manifested faith, and manifested in some other way than simply in asking for sight. They must answer his question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" He pauses for a reply. And they said unto him, "Yea, Lord." And it is noticeable how constantly, in the miraculous cures which

Christ wrought, this condition is distinctly alluded to as a thing strictly required. Cures were not wrought because diseases existed and Christ was able to heal them. Cures were not wrought because Christ would multiply the monuments of his divine power, and hence afford the spectator still more evidence of his divine mission. Cures were not wrought because the diseased endured great privation or suffering. And, finally, cures were not wrought because the sufferers earnestly sought and passionately implored his aid. They were wrought because of their faith. And the same condition is made prominent and absolutely essential where healing aid is sought for the soul. It is not enough that the soul is blind or otherwise diseased by sin; this is not a reason for Christ to heal it. It is not a reason that the healing of the plague of the heart is a glorious triumph of Christ's power; it is no honor to grace to save men otherwise than Infinite Wisdom has appointed. It is no sufficient reason with Christ to save a sinner because he needs salvation, and must be forever miserable without his aid. Christ is not moved to save sinners because they desire to be saved, and most passionately pray and implore him to save them. All these did not avail the blind men of Capernaum; all these will not avail the sinner in the matter of his soul's salvation. "According to your faith," not according to your needs, or your desires, or your prayers,—"according to your faith be it unto you," was the saying of Christ unto them. And in like manner, he says to sinners, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." You may need salvation; you will certainly perish without it; you may desire it; you may seek it; you may fervently importune for it; but all this without faith avails you nothing. "If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins." But,—

IV. The text not only speaks of the necessity of faith, but indicates, in one respect at least, the nature of the faith required. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" An emphasis seems to be laid on the word "able," as expressing the particular object of this faith. "They said unto him, Yea, Lord," we do believe that thou art able. "And he said unto them, According to your faith, be it unto you." Faith in Christ's ability was, in this case, demanded and professed; and the request sought was granted to that faith which had the sufficiency of Christ for its object. The expression, "according to your faith," is by some explained to mean, the measure of your faith, and not the nature and reality of it. But this interpretation is attended with great difficulties. It makes faith available, not by its own nature, but by its degree; hence it is not every one that believeth that shall be saved, but only those whose faith rises to a certain degree. But this is not Scripture. Faith is everywhere made a saving condition,—faith, a living, substantial element of grace in the soul,—without a word being said as to the age of it, or the degree of it. But again: the word "according," cannot denote the measure or degree of faith, for the reason that the promise itself, instead of being absolute, would, on this principle, be broken up into parts and fragments. If Christ spoke of the degree of this faith, then his promise must have been understood as proportioned to the degree. If the faith were perfect, then the cure would be perfect; if the faith were less than perfect, then only a part of the cure would be wrought.

And if this is the rule here, it must be so in other cases. Where salvation is promised to faith, if the promise is limited to the degree of faith, and not determined by its nature and reality, then complete pardon,



complete justification and adoption, are received only by a faith perfect in degree. And when it is imperfect, — “like a grain of mustard-seed,” as our Saviour styles it, — then is the sinner only in a small degree pardoned, justified, and saved. Such are the difficulties of supposing, with some, that Christ, instead of appending promises to simple acts of faith, limits the measure of the promises to the measure of the faith. If this be the rule, we may well say, with the apostle, Who, then, can be saved? But, to return to the text, you say you believe I am able to do this; now, then, as you thus believe, so be it unto you. That the faith required respected the ability or sufficiency of Christ to grant the desired aid, is evident from other examples that may be adduced. The man who brought to Christ his son, that had from a child been possessed of a devil, who often threw him into the fire and into the water to destroy him, said, “If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” The sequel shows that Christ laid hold on that expression, “If thou canst,” as betraying that kind of unbelief which would prevent a cure. “If thou canst,” do you say? I say, if you can believe, believe that I am able; “all things are possible to him that believeth.” The faith here demanded is manifestly that which has the sufficiency of Christ for its object; and unless the disconsolate father would blot out the *if*, and say, “thou canst,” there was no relief for his son.

Hence his instant exclamation: Lord, I do believe; help me, if there be any reserve in it. In like manner, the faith of the leper had for its object the ability of Christ, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” He professes no positive belief in the willingness of Christ, but a perfect confidence in his power. But here was the faith demanded, though the supplicant needed

as yet to be assured of the readiness of Christ to help him. If you can trust my power, says Christ, I will assure you of my willingness; be thou clean. When Peter began to sink in the waters, and cried, "Lord, save me!" what was his unbelief, that well-nigh occasioned his destruction, but an unbecoming and sinful distrust of the power of his Lord. He believed that Christ was able to sustain him on the waves, and while he had this faith the surging element was to his feet like the mountain rock; but the instant the doubt arose in his mind, "if thou canst," the floods parted beneath him, and would swallow him up.

And in all cases may not this implicit, unreserved, absorbing persuasion of the all-sufficiency of Christ be the distinctive feature of that faith to which Christ is pleased to annex his promises, "All things are possible to him who believes?" Believes what? That thou canst help us. "Believe ye that I am able?" We believe that thou art able; then be it as you believe. St. Paul describes his faith in Christ in these words: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He was doubtless persuaded that Christ was willing to keep; but he says nothing of this; he intimates that a belief in his willingness was not the chief requisite in faith, but the persuasion that he was able to keep.

And, let me ask, is not this the highest and most difficult thing for the mind to apprehend and rest upon in those works that are peculiar to God? Was it as difficult for the blind men to believe in the willingness as in the power of Christ to restore their sight? Would they not rather take it for granted that he would desire to help them, provided he was able and it was consistent?

If I mistake not, then, our text throws some light on the mind in regard to the nature of saving faith. There may be a persuasion of Christ's willingness to help us, while we cherish a doubt of his ability. This, if it be any faith at all, is a faith which Christ will challenge: "Believest thou that I am able?" Again, there may be a full persuasion of his ability, and yet not an equal persuasion that he will help us; but to such a faith Christ is pleased to say, "I will; be thou clean."

But does any one answer and say, This is making saving faith a very common grace in the world; for who that believes the gospel can doubt the sufficiency of Christ to save all he chooses to save? And to this I might reply, Can any one doubt the existence and perfections of God, who has the Bible in his hand, or who breathes the air of heaven, or whose eye traverses the ample field of the Creator's works? And yet this same inspired word says, "The fool (the sinner) hath said in his heart there is no God." Surely an atheist is a rare thing in a Christian land, and yet in the judgment of God all men are atheists by nature. Just in the same sense, then, that men are atheists with the Bible in their hands are they unbelievers in the sufficiency of Christ with the gospel in their hands. Do you say that all men believe in the sufficiency of Christ to save, who believe in the gospel? True, they believe in the one just as much as they believe in the other, and in neither do they, like the devils, so believe as to tremble. Do you say, If this is faith, then all men will finally believe; believe when his infinite power and glory are revealed, as they will be when the heavens and earth shall flee away at his presence? I answer, No, not then will sinners believe in his power to save, for the power to save the impenitent he will not then possess; and of course it cannot be the

object of faith. Christ's power to give salvation to men is limited to time, to the day of salvation; and when this day expires the work of it is closed, and the kingdom delivered up to the Father, and the Son enters upon the glorious rest of an eternal Sabbath. "He that is filthy will be filthy still," and the power to save will be as though no atonement existed. Do you still say that all men who believe the gospel believe in the sufficiency of Christ to save? Why, then, are they not saved by that power? In cases where we are needy and dependent, we resort for aid to those who, as we believe, are able to help us. So long as my confidence in the skill of the physician is unshaken and complete, I commit my diseased body to his care, and lie quietly and passively in his hands. So to the pilot, to whom, as we believe, not a reef or bar or a dangerous coast is unknown, we cheerfully commit the helm, and feel a quiet assurance that under his guidance the ship will ride safely to her moorings. Why, then, does not the sinner commit his soul to Christ, if he believes that Christ is able to save him? Alas! he indulges in himself low thoughts of the exalted Son of God, the glorious manifestation of the Godhead in human flesh, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will confide in man, a worm of the dust, but not in the God who made him. When the sinner becomes concerned about his soul and its eternal welfare, he begins to consider what work he has to do to obtain salvation. He says to himself, I must get religion, and then I shall be saved, and without it I shall be lost. And what is religion? Why, it is some great blessing that lies hid somewhere, and I must go in pursuit of it, and try all my skill to find it; or it is a blessing somewhere locked up and secured, and I must gird up my loins with

strength, and force my way along until I can come where it is. And so he goes on, seeking and striving and pursuing, under the full persuasion that there is something, he hardly knows what, but something which he must do, and which Christ cannot do, or he shall be lost. And though at every step Christ says to him, Foolish man, forbear; without me you can do nothing; only believe that I am able, and all things will be possible to you,—yet he regards it not, but holds on to self-dependence until he is caught by some delusive hope, or plunges into despair of all hope. Yes, all the seeking, the working, the striving of the awakened sinner, is but a sinful unbelief in Christ as a complete and all-sufficient Saviour, and a vain attempt to do something which Christ is not able to do. It is the perilous attempt to work out their own righteousness, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ his Son. This, fellow-sinner, is your case; it is your condemnation that you will not believe in the sufficiency of Him whom God hath sent to save you. Thus you live in all your sins, ruined, lost, and hell is naked to receive you; and the great God our Saviour draws near and says, Look unto me and be ye saved; look to me as your hope, your only hope; your all-sufficient hope; believe that I am able to do this, and commit your soul to me, as Paul did, in the full persuasion that I am able to keep it, and your redemption is at hand. But you turn away, saying, I must save myself or be lost. And lost, irrecoverably, eternally lost you must be, so long as you refuse to believe that Christ is mighty to save, even to the uttermost, all who come unto God through Him.

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## SERMON XIII.

### THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL A LIFE.

"BUT THE ANGEL OF THE LORD BY NIGHT OPENED THE PRISON DOORS, AND BROUGHT THEM FORTH, AND SAID, GO, STAND AND SPEAK IN THE TEMPLE TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE." — *Acts* v. 19, 20.<sup>1</sup>

THE events recorded in this connection are full of instruction to the Christian reader of all times. It was the period in which the foundations of the church, the kingdom of God among men, were laid; its distinctive character and aims developed; its order, discipline, worship, and sacramental rites instituted or exemplified in practice; when its ministry was baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and its liberties asserted against the persecuting powers of earth. Here we behold the religion of Moses and of the prophets, corrupted by the foulest error and superstition, and disgraced by an unworthy priesthood, but supported by the arm of civil power, arrayed in open and irreconcilable conflict with the truth as it is in Jesus. Here we discover with what implacable hostility to Christ and the course of human salvation the heart of man may be inspired; and, at the same time, how unavailing is all human power, when employed to resist the purposes of the Almighty. And, once more, we here

perceive the limits which God has set to the authority of man in matters of truth and religion, the divine right which every man has to true liberty of conscience, and the obligation he is under to disregard the authority that would restrict this liberty wherewith Christ maketh free, or hinder him in the work to which God has manifestly called him.

Strong were the hopes which the Jewish party cherished that they had effectually suppressed the new doctrine which had agitated the cities and villages of Judea, when, by the most ignominious form known under the Roman laws, they had put its Teacher to death. But these hopes were of short duration, and destined to end in utter disappointment and confusion. In the morning of the second day after his crucifixion tidings were brought to the high-priest's palace, by the guard who watched at the sepulchre, that Jesus had risen and shown himself to his disciples. Next came the intelligence that he had ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. Then followed the report that the Spirit of God had come upon the disciples; that they were endued with the gift of tongues, to proclaim to all nations that were present at the feast "the wonderful works of God;" and that the people were listening with profound interest to their testimony. No longer terrified by their adversaries, the disciples openly appeared in the temple, and spoke of Jesus and of his resurrection, and exhorted the people to repent, and be baptized in his name for the remission of their sins; and thousands gladly received the word, and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.

This new and unexpected development of the doctrine of Jesus, casting, as it did, into the shade all that had

been witnessed before, roused again into activity the spirit of persecution. The apostles were brought into the court of the high priest, and commanded not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But these men, no longer of the timid spirit which they betrayed when their Master was arrested, boldly replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye? For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Having asserted their right and their purpose to do the Lord's bidding, and not man's, they went forth, and everywhere, in the street and in the temple, "with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord;" and the effect was, what may always be expected when the church and her servants with united, earnest, and confiding hearts engage in the work of the Lord; for the Lord worked with them, and "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." "Then the high-priest rose up, and all they that were with him, and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth, and said, Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Here we should notice how God, in a miraculous manner, sanctions disobedience to human authority, when that authority is arrayed against the word of God. The apostles had been arrested for disobeying their rulers, but the angel of the Lord sets them at large. They had been commanded not to speak at all in the name of Jesus; but God commands them to speak boldly, and to declare his whole counsel. Civil authority is doubtless of divine origin, and in all matters to which it properly extends is entitled to respect and obedience. "Unto



the higher powers," says the apostles, "let every soul be subject. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." And these instructions he grounds on the general maxim which follows: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." From the reason, then, which he assigns in support of the duty of obedience, we may infer that, when human authority is so far perverted as to employ the terror with which it is armed to restrain men from good works and force them to do evil, then our obligations to it are changed; and, as the apostles said on the occasion before us, "we ought to obey God rather than men."

Again, the text leads us to notice that when the cause of truth is boldly assailed by its adversaries, it is proper that it should be sustained with equal boldness by its friends. Our Saviour laid it down as a general direction to his disciples, that when they were persecuted in one city they should flee to another. But this rule has its limitations and exceptions. The apostles were persecuted and cast into prison, but they were not at liberty to flee in pursuit of a people whose minds might be more favorably affected towards the truth which they promulgated. They must remain in the city with their opposers, and thereby show to the church and the world that they did not fear what man could do unto them. Nay, they were not at liberty to retire into the obscure parts of the city, and there, in a private and secret manner, instruct such as were disposed to hear them. They were directed to occupy the most public places of resort, yea, to take their stand in the very temple of the Jews, and there boldly speak in the name of Jesus to all who came up to worship. It was the Lord's house, and no

man could forbid that his word should be proclaimed there. It was a house of prayer "for all nations," and it was suitable that there the nations should hear the glad tidings of great joy which were sent forth to cheer the hearts of all people.

But my object at this time is to consider,—

1. In what sense the religion of the gospel is denominated a life, "and speak unto the people all the words of this life." The religion of the gospel, then, I remark, in the first place, is a life, in distinction from mere opinions. True religion, as it is founded in revealed truth, implies, doubtless, a knowledge and belief of the truth. Not to believe the truth is, according to the apostle, to have pleasure in unrighteousness; that is, to be devoted to a life of sin. But the mind may acquire a set of opinions in regard to the doctrines taught by Christ, and these opinions may be correct, and still be destitute of faith. Opinion is confined to the understanding; but it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness." The one is a judgment formed; the other, a conviction, a sentiment felt. Simple opinion only serves to satisfy the mind, while faith is a power or spirit which rouses it to a moral conflict with the powers of darkness and with spiritual wickedness in high places. "Knowledge," says the apostle, "puffeth up," but "faith purifies the heart and overcomes the world."

2. The religion of the gospel is a life in distinction from mere forms and observances. We do not say that religion has no forms; for it is by forms only that it can receive an outward manifestation. To deprive religion of these would be like depriving the tree of the fruit by which it is adorned and made useful to man. But there may be the outward, solemn observance of religion, without the inward fear and love of God pervading the

soul. God may be worshipped with the lips, while the heart is far from him. There may be the form of godliness, as the apostle expresses it, without the power. It was because this religion had degenerated into a mere set of outward observances, that the Lord uttered this terrible rebuke to his ancient people: "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts, bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity; even the solemn meeting, your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them."

3. The religion of the gospel is a life, because it commences in the quickening influences of the Spirit. The moral state of men by nature is designated in Scripture by the term "death." They are without holiness, because they have not the life of God within them; because they "are dead in sins." Now, it is by reversing this state that man becomes the subject of true religion; instead of being dead in sin he becomes alive to God. The change begins in a birth of the soul, and this is wrought by a special divine power. Hence the Son of God, because he came to save the world by reconciling it to God, is said to "have life in himself," and to quicken the will; yea, to be "the life of men." He came to impart a new life to those that were dead, and by this life to qualify them for heaven. Hence, too, the work of the Holy Spirit is represented as consisting preëminently in giving to and perfecting in the soul the life of God. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "Except a man be born of water and of the

Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

This language is descriptive of a soul raised from a state of sin to one of holiness; and it is done by a new birth. It is not a setting up of new opinions simply in the understanding, a chaining down of the outer man to a set of solemn forms and observances, but planting life, which is the image of God, with the powers and sympathies and enjoyments of life, where death, the death of sin, before reigned with all its darkness, and silence, and woe.

4. The religion of the gospel is denominated a life, because its elements are living powers. Religion is not a mere negation, the absence of moral evil; it is a positive state of the soul, one of earnest, and, it may be, intense activity in striving, overcoming, and reaching forward to a higher, holier, happier state; and all this betokens the presence and agency of living powers in the depths of the soul. Even the tree by its yearly growth, its luxuriant foliage, and abundant fruit, gives evidence that the mysterious powers of life are at work within it. No man thinks of referring the phenomena he beholds to an outward or mechanical agency; and the powers of life, not of mere mechanism, are at work also in the soul that is born of God. Love is an element of true religion, and love is a working, modifying power. It is the fulfilling of the Law; it is keeping the commandments; it is what affinity in natural bodies is, — the principle that attracts, unites, and assimilates the loving subject to the loved object. It transforms the creature in whom it is planted into the image of the Creator. It is styled by the apostle "the bond of perfectness," by which all in whom it dwells become one in Christ Jesus. Faith, too, is an element of true religion,

for without it it is impossible to please God. And faith is not dead, but a living and life-giving energy. It purifies the heart; it works by love; it overcomes the world. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." Hope, in like manner, is an element of Christianity; and this, too, is a cheering, impulsive power in the soul, and not a mere calculation or judgment of the understanding. Hope "is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast." Having this hope in us, we purify ourselves, even as Christ is pure. "We are saved by hope;" yea, "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Such are the properties ascribed to hope as a constituent of religion in the soul, and these are all the properties of a living power — a power which tends to promote that life "which is hid with Christ in God."

Once more: the religion of the gospel is denominated a life, because it exhibits the properties of a life that is constantly renewing and that never ends. There is permanency to it; and this is one of the attributes of life. There is not to the soul that is born of God a succession of life and death, as of sleeping and waking to the body, but a life whose powers are never extinguished, never suspended. "Because I live," says Christ, "ye shall live also." "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "Who-soever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Growth is a property of life, and growth, not from outward mechanism, but from unseen, mysterious powers working within us, — a growth, in short, conformable to the type of that order or class to which it belongs. Now, it is thus that the soul, once born from above, grows in knowledge and grace till it comes to the fulness of the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. As it is created after God in righteousness and true holiness, so does it grow up into the likeness of God, being

transformed from the image of the earthly into the image of the heavenly. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." But enough has been said to show that the religion of Christ is truly a life in the soul, yea, and the highest and noblest form of life ; for it is divine in its origin, and eternal in its duration. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent."

II. We proceed to inquire what is meant by "the words of this life." By this expression we are to understand, doubtless, those truths which concern the religion of Christ, the life of God in the soul. 1st. They are the truths which affirm the absence of this life in men by nature, as when it is said, "Ye are dead in trespasses and sins," "by nature the children of wrath." "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil and that continually." "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that seeketh after God ; there is none that doeth good." This language affirms that men by nature are all unholy and sinful ; without God in the world, and having no hope ; and these truths it is essential that all men understand, in order that they should attain to the life of God.

Again : by "the words of this life" we are to understand the truths which exhibit the nature of this life and the source whence it is derived. As it is something which every man must seek in order to find, it is important to know what he is to seek, and where to find it. This life consists essentially in the moral resemblance of our souls to God—in being created after him, or according to him, in righteousness and true holiness. Hence we are

commanded to be "conformed to God;" to be "followers of God as dear children;" to be holy because he is holy. And if we know what we need, and ask where we shall find it, we are taught by "the words of this life." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "Verily, verily I say unto you," are the words of Christ, "the hour cometh, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And to encourage all who would come, but fear to venture, he adds this word of life to all his other invitations and assurances: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And again: "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out."

Once more: by "the words of this life" we are to understand the truths which exhibit the necessity of this life to the salvation of men. As it is said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Whatever, then, men are to know and believe; whatever they are required to do or to be, in order to be saved; nay, whatever serves to awaken them to a sense of their condition as sinners, and to rouse them to an earnest and timely effort to escape the wrath to come, is included in the phrase, "the words of this life."

III. Let us notice the charge given to the apostles and to all who have the word of reconciliation committed unto them: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." The temple was a national edifice, and claimed by the Jews for the support of the established religion; but the apostles were commanded to go thither, for there the people were

assembled, and to plant the cross by the side of the altar, and to proclaim boldly the doctrine, that "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." This doctrine was offensive to the Jews, and had already subjected the apostles to imprisonment, and might expose them to death; but return they must, and in the presence of their opposers exhort the people to "repent that their sins might be blotted out." They were not at liberty to avoid the offensive part of their message, and preach to the people only what might be tolerated by all. On the other hand, they were charged, irrespective of the likings or dislikings of their hearers, to speak "to the people all the words of this life." And this charge is, in substance, binding on all who succeed the apostles in the work of the ministry, or who aspire to be fellow-laborers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

Infinite Wisdom foresaw what man in his deep depravity and manifold errors and delusions needed, and has published a gospel commensurate with his needs, embracing neither more nor less than what his absolute safety required. There is not one statement too many or too strong; not a precept or doctrine, not a promise or threatening, but was needful for the safety of those who are ordained to eternal life. He, then, who mutilates the gospel in one iota of its message may destroy the power and efficacy of that message to you or to me. To keep back anything may be keeping back that very thing which to us is the wisdom and power of God unto salvation. If the life of God is by nature quenched in the hearts of men, and they are dead in sins; if the only righteousness which can avail them is that which is derived from the meritorious sufferings and death of the Lord's Christ; if they are dependent on the Spirit



for that new life without which they cannot see the kingdom of God; if there is a day appointed in which God will judge the world by Jesus Christ; if salvation is provided for all who will accept it on the terms of the gospel, and everlasting punishment for all who reject or neglect it, — then these truths must, each and all, be spoken, and spoken plainly, to such as will hear, or God, who will have all men to be saved, will add to us the plagues that are written in his book.

And if such an imperative charge is laid upon all who pretend to speak the words of this life, what shall be the end of those who hear not, or, hearing, obey not the gospel of God? This, fellow-sinner, is a question for you to answer, — for you who have spent your days within the sound of the gospel, and still have “no hope,” and are “without God in the world.” All “the words of this life” have been spoken to you, and these are they which shall judge you in the last day.

## SERMON XIV.

### CHRISTIAN CONDUCT BEFORE THE IMPENITENT.

"WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT, REDEEMING THE TIME." — *Col. iv. 5.*<sup>1</sup>

IN this connection the apostle notices, in a brief manner, certain duties which rest indiscriminately on all who name the name of Christ. And the first in order is one which they owe to themselves, namely, to cultivate and evince a prayerful spirit. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving." To continue in prayer is to preserve the mind in a prayerful frame; it is to feel, habitually, our dependence on God and our unworthiness of his mercies; it is a thirsting for God, as the fountain of all good, and a preparation of the heart to engage, on all suitable occasions, in the exercise of prayer, with gratitude and delight. We watch unto prayer when we anticipate all prayer, especially all appointed seasons for prayer, and guard against all occurrences which may prevent our engaging in the duty, or distract our thoughts and cool the fervor of our desires. Now, here lies the first and most important duty of the Christian, because on this prayerful frame of heart depends the right discharge

of all other duties. The soul that is pervaded with the spirit of prayer is fitted, morally, for all the work whereunto the Lord calls it; while, in the absence of this spirit, it is qualified to do nothing satisfactorily to itself or acceptable to God.

The duty next in order, which the apostle enjoins on Christians, is to be always mindful in their prayers of those who labor in word and doctrine: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ." On God alone are ministers dependent for the success which attends their labors. God must open the door of utterance, or it is in vain that they attempt to unfold the mystery of Christ. The word dispensed must become the wisdom and power of God, or it will be for the destruction rather than for the edification of those who hear it. But God's blessing on his ministers and their labors, the success which crowns their efforts for the prosperity of the church and the salvation of the impenitent, is in proportion to that continual, earnest, and believing prayer which pervades the hearts of his people. Hence the apostle besought an interest in their prayers, both for himself and for all to whom the word of reconciliation was committed, that this word might have free course and be glorified.

Another duty incumbent on believers is that which is enjoined in the text, and is involved in those relations which all Christians on earth sustain to the impenitent around them. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." In elucidating the precept here laid down, it will be convenient to inquire who are the persons to be affected by the duty enjoined; what is implied in the duty; the encouragement we have to perform it, and the consequences of neglecting or delaying it.

**I. Who are the persons to be affected by the fulfilment or neglect of the duty enjoined in the text?** There is, indeed, an important sense in which all who witness the deportment of Christians are influenced by it. Christians powerfully affect each other by their daily walk and conversation. The happy or deplorable results of individual example may be traced in every Christian society. One member truly devoted to God, denying himself all ungodliness, earnest in doing good, steadfast in the truth, faithful in all covenant relations, abounding in liberality, meek and temperate in his words and actions, and of a prayerful spirit, will not fail to exert an influence for good on the whole body with which he is connected. And so, too, if he be devoted to the world, seeking his own and not the things which are Christ's, will he dishearten the exertions and lower the tone of piety through the whole church. Hence, if the church alone is to be regarded, it becomes every Christian to take heed to his example.

But, in the text, the apostle contemplates the influence of Christian example, as exerted in another direction. The influence of Christians is not confined to the church; it goes forth, for good or evil, on the world around them. There are those "that are without." They belong not to the family of Christ; they have never fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them; they have no portion in the kingdom of Christ and of God. They are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." They are immortal beings, but they have not laid up in store a good foundation against the time to come. They are precious souls whom Christ loved, and for whom he gave himself unto death, even the death of the cross;

but they "have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." For them the Sabbath was sanctified, and to them the gospel is preached, and with them the Holy Spirit has striven; but hitherto they have resisted the grace of God, and after their hard and impenitent hearts have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Such are the beings by whom the church everywhere is surrounded; for the whole world lieth in wickedness. Such are the beings who daily pass before the eyes of every Christian. They are found in our families, and among our children, and relatives, and friends. Such are the beings, O Christian, whose eyes watch all your conduct, whose ears are open to all your words, and whose faithful memories treasure up for their own weal or woe the thousand deeds which you have done or neglected to do. These are the children of disobedience, who must be brought into the fold of the great Shepherd, or be left to take their portion with the "fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars; who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." These are the souls "that are without," and whose character and everlasting destiny are to be influenced by your walk and example.

II. What is implied in the language of the text, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without"? It will be noticed that the apostle alludes in this connection to the example of professed Christians. He does not speak here of the instruction they shall give, but the walk they shall exhibit. He does not address them as teachers, sent forth to counsel, exhort, or admon-

ish their fellow-men, but simply as believers who are living a life in the flesh, in daily intercourse with the men of the world, sharing in the labors and enterprises of men, feeling the influences of the world, and plied with its temptations ; and his object is to put each one on his guard, and invite all to a life so exemplary that none shall stumble and fall by reason of their inconsistent walk. " Let Christian propriety mark all your intercourse with ' them that are without.' " Let sound discretion govern all your plans and actions ; be on your guard against all the temptations of the world, and the wiles of the devil. Walk in the light, and under the guidance of that " wisdom which is from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." The whole force of the precept, then, applies manifestly to the example of Christians as exerting a salutary or disastrous influence on the souls of the impenitent. The apostle strives to induce each professor to live in such a manner as true wisdom would dictate, if he would do the least possible injury and the greatest possible good to impenitent men.

Among the things, then, involved in the precept before us, I shall proceed to particularize some which Christians are tempted to disregard, and by so doing greatly injure the souls of men.

1. Strict integrity and probity in all our dealings with men. In a world where gain is accounted as godliness, and where respectability and influence depend more on wealth than anything else, it should hardly surprise us that all the arts of overreaching and fraud should be resorted to as the means of getting rich. But if the servants of mammon choose to employ such means, the

children of the kingdom are not at liberty to do so. Nay, the doors of God's kingdom are eternally closed against those who do these things. The covetous man shall not inherit the kingdom of God. True wisdom prescribes no such course for him who is exerting an influence on the character and destiny of the souls of men. Better that the whole church be seared with poverty and want, than enriched by frauds, and falsehoods, and oppression. The first thing, then, the world demands of the Christian is, that he be a just man, a man of truth and uprightness in all his transactions. Let him swerve from this character, and his influence on sinners, except for evil, is dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Henceforth he is powerful only to destroy. In this matter, then, let him avoid even the appearance of evil; let him "walk in wisdom towards them that are without."

2. The precept in the text implies that we exercise great caution in our manner of speaking of our fellow-men. Of all offences, those of the tongue are perhaps the most injurious, and, at the same time, the most easily perpetrated. What is taken from us by fraud and violence, we may recover again; or, at least, the possession of it may not be essential to our peace and usefulness; but by a single word our reputation, our influence, our hopes may be most seriously impaired, if not irretrievably lost. "The tongue," says the Spirit of God, "is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." No man can tame it. "It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." Wisdom, then, is surely to be exercised in our walk towards them

that are without, and whom we are sent to win back to God and to heaven. By our words — always true, always kind, faithful, and conciliating — we may secure their confidence and esteem; and by our words, too, we may arouse their wrath; we may alienate their confidence; we may cast them forever beyond the reach of a better influence which we may strive in vain to extend to them; we may destroy their souls. O, what havoc has been made of the souls of men by this unruly member! What precious treasures of Christian influence sacrificed by it in one unguarded moment! Who of us has not mourned in shame and sorrow that he hath not put a bridle on his tongue while the wicked was before him?

3. The precept in the text is violated by all immoral and scandalous acts, by which the Christian life is disgraced. Hypocrites and self-deceivers are doubtless in the visible church, and while there they are loaded with all the responsibilities of the true disciple. Their relation to the church invests them with an influence which otherwise they would not have, and, of course, imposes on them a duty which otherwise would not be theirs. Sin, open and scandalous, exerts in their case the same disastrous influence on the souls of men as it does in the case of any other professed Christian. But the hypocrite and the self-deceiver are not the only ones in the church by whom offences may come. Eminent saints have brought a reproach on religion, and thereby cast a stumbling-block in the way of the wicked, by being overcome in the hour of sudden temptation. But all scandal in the church is to be lamented, not merely on account of the guilt which attaches to the offender, but also because of its deplorable effect on them "that are without." The world has a right to expect that profes-



sors of religion shall keep themselves unspotted from open and scandalous sins. They have a right to expect that the professed children of the kingdom shall put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; yea, that they walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. And he who doeth these things and the like, must know that not only his influence as a man, but the influence he derives from his connection with the church, is all exerted injuriously, and disastrously perhaps, on the souls of the impenitent.

4. The precept in the text requires that Christians strive to adorn their profession in all things, and to exert a positive and salutary influence on the souls of men. We "walk in wisdom," not merely by abstaining from that which works for evil, but by doing, also, that which works for good. It is not enough that we refrain from destroying; it should be our earnest endeavor to save. The impenitent may find in us no encouragement to sin, no excuse for delaying repentance; but do they also find in our daily example that which reproves them for their sins; that which makes them uneasy in their present condition; that which arouses their fears and awakens their slumbering consciences; that which commends the religion of the gospel to their hearts; that, in fine, which almost persuades them to be Christians? Such is the influence which Paul the apostle, and which the Lord Jesus Christ would have all the disciples exert. For this they must earnestly strive who would "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." Having thus far considered the class of persons to be affected by an observance of the precept enjoined in the text, and some of the particulars comprised in the precept, we proceed to consider, —

III. The importance of the precept here laid down. And its importance will appear when we consider the proneness of Christians to disregard the duty it comprises. It is, indeed, essential to the Christian character to cherish an interest in the welfare of all souls, and, hence, to desire and labor for the conversion of the impenitent. These are the feelings of God, the Father of all men: "For he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn and live." And how can we be like God, unless our hearts are the seat of the same benevolent desires? Christ, too, loved the souls of men, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins, and came down from heaven "to seek and save that which was lost." "And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." No true disciple, then, can be uniformly destitute of a sincere and lively interest in the spiritual welfare of his fellow-men. But this interest may, for a season, lamentably decline, and the obligations which at one time press heavily on his mind, may at another be almost obliterated. Hence he becomes remiss in all his duties to those around him; he is careless of his example; nay, it would seem, almost, that he shaped the tenor of his life as if there were no souls to be influenced by him, or that he cared not for the ruin he was helping to bring upon them. How suitable, then, that he be cautioned against the sin he is liable to bring upon his own soul! How important that he be distinctly and solemnly admonished "to walk in wisdom toward them that are without!"

But, again: the importance of this precept is manifest from the great and acknowledged influence which Christians exert on the souls of the impenitent. This influence for good ends, we know, is not effective in itself; but it is an influence constituted of God, and

by his grace made successful in the salvation of men. So great is its power, that believers are styled co-workers with God ; yea, the apostle could say to the disciples at Corinth, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

The instrumentality of God's people, we have reason to believe, is ever employed in turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. So far is it the wisdom of God to observe this rule in reclaiming sinners to himself, that, we may safely say, with some rare exceptions, all conversions take place through some agency exerted directly or indirectly by believers. If, then, such consequences depend upon the part they have to perform, how unspeakably important that this duty be clearly set forth, and often inculcated ; and that they be incited to all watchfulness and diligence that no sinner, through their neglect, fail of the grace of God !

Once more : the importance of the precept before us will appear when we reflect how eager are the men of the world to catch at the failings of professed Christians, and to plead them in extenuation of their own guilt. The virtuous deeds of the Christian they will suffer to pass in silence, unless they can attribute them to a selfish and unworthy motive ; but let some foul spot appear in his life, and none are more quick to discover it, yea, and aggravate and bruit it abroad. What intelligence spreads more rapidly through society, and penetrates its most hidden recesses, than that which relates to the improprieties or immoralities of professed Christians ? The prophet Jeremiah describes this spirit as it worked in his day. "For I heard the defaming of many—fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my

halting, saying, peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him." If such, then, be the known propensity of the unrenewed heart in every age of the world, what an additional motive does it present to the professed Christian to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." If unconverted sinners are not content with the difficulties which already lie in the way of their return to God, but would multiply new impediments from such materials as the sins of professors supply, how ought professors to take heed that no such materials be furnished them! If the impenitent are so eager to neutralize the feeble influence, even, which good men may exert for their salvation, and close up the channels through which the saving mercy of God ordinarily reaches the transgressor, then how anxious should the Christian be to guard and cherish whatever influence for good God may have given him, and strive to remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way by which God would reclaim all men to himself! Finally, if sinners are so intent on self-destruction that they would fain compel the church of God to be accessory to the suicidal act, then with what solicitude should the church, in all its members, watch and pray; in what simplicity and godly sincerity should they have their conversation in the world; with what fearfulness should they strive that if sinners perish the blood of their souls should not be found on their skirts!

IV. We proceed to consider the encouragement Christians have to observe the precept in the text.

God is pleased to annex a reward to obedience in all cases. "Forasmuch as ye know," says the apostle, "that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." There is no self-denial, no sacrifice of personal ease or

comfort to which the Christian submits for Christ's sake that shall pass unrecompensed and forgotten. If the reward be not fully realized here, it will be hereafter in the blessedness of that world whither his works shall follow him. But the Christian is encouraged to obey the exhortation in the text by a reasonable assurance that such a course will be productive of lasting good to his fellow-men. When the apostle charged the believers in Colosse to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without," he did it because he believed that this was the most effectual means they could employ to win souls to Christ. And this belief is confirmed by all that took place in the days of the apostles, and that has taken place since. The sacred historian, after describing the lives which individual believers lived, the walk which they maintained toward them that are without, how they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer, distributing of their possessions and goods as every man had need, adds, as the result of all this, that "fear came upon every soul," that "they had favor with all the people," and "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

And again, having spoken of the churches as walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, he adds immediately, "and they were multiplied." Such was the happy effect, both on the church and on the impenitent, when believers walked in wisdom toward them that are without. Sinners were arrested in their course of sin, and brought to repentance. The church enlarged its numbers, and was edified and strengthened; for the Lord added to it daily. Sermons and exhortations sinners will contrive to dispose of; they will stop their ears against them, or they will resist the impression

which they are fitted to make, by bringing to remembrance the inconsistencies of professed Christians. But what will they do when these inconsistencies are rarely to be found? What will they do when the church in all its members has put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light? when all their walk and conversation, their actions and words, are worthy of Him who hath called them unto his kingdom and glory? What refuge now remains where they can hide? what balm to soothe their disquieted hearts? what shield for their consciences against the sharp two-edged sword of God's word, which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit? Surely, when the time shall come in which the church shall awake to righteousness and sin not, then will a new era dawn upon the world—the day of Pentecost will return. Sinners in Zion will no longer be at ease; fearfulness will surprise them, and multitudes will seek unto the Lord in an accepted time.

V. We were to consider the urgency of the duty enjoined in the text, and the consequences of delaying its performance.

This thought is suggested by the last clause of the verse, "redeeming the time." As if he would say, "The duty to which I exhort you is a present duty; it cannot be postponed without wrong to yourselves, and danger to the souls of them that are without. You are called to be saints, to walk in wisdom before the world, to win souls to Christ, and thus glorify him who hath called you. Go, then, speedily, and engage in your Master's business. Ye are the children of the day and not of the night; sleep not, therefore, as do others, but watch and be sober."

. "Redeeming the time." These words indicate the preciousness of time. This is the measure of all the

works that are done under the sun. Whatever value belongs to human exploits, the same attaches to time, for in time alone can the purposes of men be achieved. In time we prepare food and raiment for our bodies, we gather riches and honors, we treasure up knowledge and wisdom. And if time is so valuable to the men of the world in their ordinary pursuits, of what inestimable value is it to him to whom it affords the only opportunity to mature the fruits of righteousness in his own soul, and to secure blessings for the needy, perishing souls of his fellow-men!

“Redeeming the time.” This expression implies that time has been lost, and ought, if possible, to be regained. And what Christian man has not occasion to deplore the precious time he has wasted in folly and in sin? Were all the fragments that have been thrown away, the hours that have been spent in sloth or feeble efforts, that have been squandered in amusement and idle conversation—were they all gathered up, into how many months and years even would they swell! In this time how much might we have accomplished for God—how much for the best interest of men—how much in building up our own souls in knowledge and in faith! But how can time once lost be recovered? How can we redeem the precious years that have passed away, with no profit either to ourselves or to others? In no way, surely, but by redoubling our diligence during the time that remains. And who can say how much of life remains for him, or how many opportunities are yet to come in which he can serve his generation by the will of God? “For what is your life? Is it not even as a vapor which continueth for a little time and then vanisheth away?” Let all who hope to be accepted of God, and to enjoy the blessedness of him who has

“turned many to righteousness,” lay these things to heart; let them henceforth live as children of the light, and not of darkness; yea, let them adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things.

Finally: let me in a few words apply the sentiment of our text to those “that are without.” We have set forth in our discourse this day the duty and responsibilities of Christians in relation to the impenitent, — the lives they ought to live, the restraints they should put upon themselves, the virtues and graces they should exhibit, so that to the greatest possible extent they may be instrumental in the salvation of your souls. Now, let me ask, if the salvation of your souls is of such infinite importance in the sight of God; if it is made the duty of all Christians, throughout life, to desire earnestly and labor diligently to secure this end, then what may God not reasonably expect of each one of you in the things that concern your own salvation? May he not expect that you will be awake while he commands the whole church to watch for you as those that must give account? While for your sakes he commands the whole body of believers to deny themselves all ungodliness, and to live soberly and righteously and godly before you, may he not insist that you also shake off your guilty slumbers, and work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling? Must all the world beside be kept awake and watching, while you are permitted to sleep? Must heaven and earth be moved for your salvation while you, the guilty and condemned, have nothing to do? No, sinner; if God requires great things of his people, he requires greater still of you. If they must watch and pray on your account, then must you, on your own account, weep and mourn for the miseries that are coming upon you, and repent “that your sins may be blotted out.” The



church may neglect her duty, and God may visit her with stripes and chastisements for her sins ; professors of religion may bring reproach on the holy cause they have espoused, and God may destroy them with the workers of iniquity ; but all this will furnish no excuse for you. “ He that is wise is wise for himself ; but he that scorneth, he alone shall bear it.” Cease, then, to plead the sins of the church in excuse for your own impenitence ; cease to slumber on in sin because they who profess to wake and watch sleep with you ; cease to harden yourselves against God because some walk as though enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction. Take care, each one of you, for his own soul, and make your peace with God now, while it is an “ accepted time and a day of salvation.”

## SERMON XV.

### DISPROPORTION BETWEEN THE DURATION AND THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.<sup>1</sup>

"REMEMBER HOW SHORT MY TIME IS; WHEREFORE HAST THOU MADE ALL  
MEN IN VAIN?"—*Psalm lxxxix.* 49.

THIS is the language of a pious and devout mind, but of one in which the light of faith was for the moment eclipsed, and whose understanding was perplexed by the dispensations of Providence. Contemplating the present life as the great scene of human exertion, the Psalmist was struck with the seeming disproportion between its short duration and the great purposes to be accomplished in it; and hence he was led to question the wisdom of the divine arrangement in regard to man. "Remember how short my time is;" "it is even as a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth." And why should man be created for so transitory a scene as this?—man, fashioned after God's own image, and endued with gifts but little inferior to those of angels,—a being of intelligent powers, inspired with

<sup>1</sup> Aug. 20, 1848. Funeral of Mrs. Harriet Kingman Smith.

high purposes, impelled in the pursuit of noble ends, and susceptible of pure affections and of exalted enjoyments? How disproportionate the part which he is fitted to act, to the stage and the scene that are allotted to him! What plans worthy of himself can he hope to accomplish within a period so brief? To what exertions is he encouraged; what hopes can he cherish; what affections or joys can be nurtured in his heart, while he beholds the shadows of death bounding his prospects on every side, and feels a constant presentiment that "few and evil will be the days of the years of his life."

To a mind occupied with such views of man and of his destiny, how natural the reflection in the last clause of the text, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" Has not the divine constitution, as it regards man, proved a failure? Has not God created a race of intelligent, exalted beings, aspiring, by the impulse of their nature, to glory and honor, capable of all attainments in knowledge and excellence and happiness, and yet neglected to supply an ample field for the play of those activities which he himself has created? Does not his own work convict him of folly, and show that he is like to the ambitious but improvident builder in the parable, of whom it is said, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish?" "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"

The sentiment insinuated in the language before us not only occupies an abiding place in the minds of many skeptical men, but serves also as an occasion of disquietude and trouble to truly pious souls, when, as in the case of the Psalmist, the withdrawal of the light of God's countenance is superadded to the afflictions they are called to endure. There is a feeling of incongruity between the period allotted to human life and the

purposes and ends which seem to have been contemplated in the bestowment of this life. We reflect that the time appointed for man upon earth is short; that he is of few days, and these, oftentimes, full of trouble. We think of the friends and kindred that once clustered about us, joyous in their own pursuits and hopes, or ministering to our wants and soothing our sorrows, who have at last disappeared from our sight. We look in vain for the companions of our childhood in the associates of our riper years; they have passed away as a dream of the night. And where, we ask, is the wisdom of such an appointment? Why awaken into life such a being as man, — a being so richly endowed, so full of promise, united by so many ties of interest and friendship to his fellow-men? Or, if that life must be awakened, why so soon extinguished? Is there not in this conclusive evidence of imperfection in the divine constitution concerning our world, or that God's plan has been broken in upon and thwarted by some agency which he had not the wisdom to foresee or the power to control? Does it not seem that the Ruler of the universe had undertaken what he could not accomplish? that his scheme for making and governing a world has not only proved vain and abortive, but infinitely disastrous to the beings whom he has created, resulting in a world of disorder, disappointment, and woe? Feelings like these seem to have arisen in the minds of such holy men as Job, and Asaph, and Ethan, as they mused on the providence of God in regard to the world. And is it strange if men less holy and less contemplative than they, when the hand of bereavement is upon them and their minds clouded with unbelief, should find it difficult to reconcile providential appointments with Infinite Wisdom? that in moments of disappointment and sor-

row they should take up the language of such men and say, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"

Let us, then, improve the present occasion, in seeking a remedy for these perplexities of the mind, the true ground on which the ways of God with men may be vindicated. The occasion of the perplexity and trouble to which we have adverted as often afflicting the minds of men, is, we repeat, the disproportion between the duration of human life and the purposes for which that life is seemingly given. The fact that man's life was so short led the Psalmist to conclude that he was created in vain.

But here let us consider, —

I. That to extend the period of human life to any supposable limits, would not relieve the mind of the difficulty complained of. In one point of view, it may be said, that duration, however long, is relatively short. Indeed, compared to eternity, all periods of time are conceived as alike; on the ground, that to the infinite all the relations of the finite fail, and, consequently, are all the same. If the present shortness of human life is evidence that God has made all men in vain, the same inference would force itself upon us though that life were protracted to any supposable extent. The years of our life, as it now is, might be multiplied by the moments of which they consist, and their product by any combination of figures which our minds could frame, and yet the long duration would have an end. And when the end came, the part in retrospect, as now, would seem like a dream of the night, a tale that is told, a vapor that vanisheth away. And when we thought that now man's career was to close — that his exalted attainments, the growth of untold ages of thought and experience, were to be extinguished, and his name and renown to

perish — might we not, with more emphasis than now, exclaim, “Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” If the wisdom of providential arrangements in regard to man is to be impeached on the ground that the period of his life is so short, we must consider that the difficulty is not relieved by prolonging this life to any extent within the limits of the finite. A solemn thought it is, and one that should make the creature silent before his Maker, that the problems which involve the Infinite can be solved only by infinitude; that man himself is the deepest of all mysteries, except as we conceive of him as born for eternity.

II. Let us consider, that as it is but a small part of man and of his destiny that falls under our observation here, so it is but a limited portion of God’s scheme in regard to him that can now be discovered. It is natural for us, and for many purposes convenient, to think of the future as separate from the present — of eternity as disjoined by some natural or artificial barrier from time. But this is an illusion of our minds; it has no existence except in our mode of contemplation. To the mind of the Deity it is one undivided whole; as truly so as our own life, or any portion of it, is a unit to our minds. And we might as well break up the life of any man into periods, and form our judgment of the divine attributes from what the man might suffer or enjoy during that period, as to separate the life that he now lives from that which awaits him, and subject the wisdom and justice of God to the test which this life may furnish. God’s scheme in regard to the sons of men is commensurate with their being. If that being terminates not here; if it flows on in an endless stream, uninterrupted by death and the dissolution of all that is seen and temporal; if it lives on when time itself shall be no longer,

and rises, it may be, to glory and honor which the mortal eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart conceived, — then let us patiently wait till we see the divine constitution developed in all its fulness and glory before we pronounce upon it, and say, “Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” There are seasons in almost every man’s life of deep perplexity and unmitigated anguish; and shall we judge of the wisdom and goodness of God from this scene of suffering, without taking into consideration those compensating periods of prosperity and joy which follow? Has not God, in the arrangements of his providence, set the good over against the evil, and ordained that “though weeping may endure for the night, yet joy cometh in the morning?” Equally preposterous is it to judge of God from what now appears, while we are ignorant of what lies hid in the vast future, to compensate for the present ills we now endure; and especially to do so, regardless of his declaration, that “All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his promise.”

III. Let us consider that there are events in this world which most affect the well-being of man that are not strictly subject to the measurement of time; in other words, it is not the time they consume in transpiring which determines at all their quality, or adds to their reality and importance. Principles are developed, events spring into notice, relations are awakened and destinies announced, in regard to which no question of time, whether it be longer or shorter, is conceived to be involved. No man thinks of passing judgment on such matters, as to whether they are good or bad, wise or foolish, salutary or hurtful, according as they are the fruit of a longer or shorter period of time. In the most important aspect in which we can contemplate them,

they stand above the influence of time, though within its limits; they derive none of their qualities from time, and occupy in fact but the shortest period into which it is divided. "God said, let there be light, and there was light." Our first parents tasted of the forbidden fruit, and themselves and their race through all future time were ruined. The Son of God bowed his head on the cross and gave up the ghost, and from that moment the salvation of the world became possible. The thief on the cross prayed and said, "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and Jesus answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here are events that took place in time; but time itself gave them no character or importance. Their influence on the well-being of men through eternity is the same, whether they were the events of an instant of time or the labor of a thousand years. That they were events of an almost indivisible period of time furnishes no indication that they took place in vain. And we cannot readily perceive why God's scheme concerning this world might not have been equally wise and perfect had the time for its development been far less protracted than it now seems to be. Had human life been limited to a much shorter period than it actually is, this would have furnished no proof that God had "made all men in vain." How much time is required to mature the noblest or the basest purposes of the mind; — purposes on which its glory and happiness, or its shame and woe, depend through an endless duration! By an act of the soul so rapid, perhaps, as to escape the measure or the notice of time, its interests may be eternally forfeited or eternally secured; and shall we impute foolishness to the Most High because that act did not require the lapse of a thousand years for its accomplishment? Shall we in a



like spirit of temerity say that "all men are made in vain," because we remember how short is the period allotted to those purposes which determine our future well-being?

Let us consider,—

IV. That in the divine constitution in regard to this world, there is an element which renders it needful that the life of man be short upon the earth. It is suitable and desirable, as all must concede, that God should govern the world in righteousness. A right sceptre, surely, should be wielded over a kingdom that is confined to the bounds neither of space nor time. If sin, with all its plagues and woes, has invaded the world, it is meet that the throne of the Highest should be the habitation of justice and judgment. It is proper and desirable that God should protect and preserve what he has created; that he should at least so far restrain the wickedness of men that the human race should not prematurely perish, and that by suicidal hands. To prevent such a disaster, God has found it necessary from time to time to abridge the period of human life, and finally to reduce it to its present narrow span. It is found that the name and the race of man can be perpetuated on the earth only by shortening the term of succession. So active are man's propensities to evil, so rapidly does he accumulate treasures of wrath both for himself and his fellow-men, that his long continuance on the earth is incompatible with the safety and well-being of the whole. Each generation becomes more powerful for evil, and perhaps more inclined to it, than its predecessors; and who can foresee the condition of the world at the end of a thousand years, or even of a hundred, should its present inhabitants continue to occupy it? What barrier could restrain the weight of

organized wealth and power, which, during so long a period, would become mighty on the earth, or control the lust of dominion and rapine and oppression that would actuate them? Let the arrangements of Divine Providence be such that sinning might have somewhat of an abiding place on earth, and "the whole creation would groan and travail in pain together," and cry out for deliverance. Hence the process of peopling and unpeopling the earth must be hastened. Generations must follow each other in quick succession; as saith the apostle, "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." Consider, then, O man, when thou lamentest how short thy life is, that it is thyself and the sinners of thy race that have so abridged it. A long tenure to the goodly earth did man enjoy, till he abused it and made it the occasion of unrestrained folly and wickedness; and it is only as a measure of safety that God now resolves to make a short work with us on the earth. And when you accuse the Most High of having made all men in vain, remember that it is because God is just and you a sinner that your days on the earth are become few and evil.

V. Let it reconcile us to the shortness of our present life to consider that there is that over which even death has no power. The strength and life of the body may give way before the great destroyer, but the soul hath a life that shall never be extinguished. That soul, with its power of thought, with its treasures of truth and experience and beauty gathered along its path in life, is destined in the scheme of God to live forever; yea, if not regardless of its high calling, to enter on an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

And with such hopes to cherish and to lean upon in regard to our departed friends, can we not be resigned to the will of Him who hath caused us for a season to part? If their death seems to us to have been premature, let us reflect that so too has been their release from the sufferings, the fears, and the sorrows of the life that now is. Has their departure left a void in the circle of our friends; has it broken the staff which supported us, silenced the voice that soothed us, and deprived us of the companions of our joys and sorrows — let us think of what it may have added to the circle of other friends, and what gifts of holiness and bliss the departed have received, now that they are translated to purer and happier seats. When we remember what sufferings and sorrows they endured on the earth, let us think of them as being “evermore with the Lord,” inhabiting “a city which hath foundations,” where “the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.” Do we mourn that they were so early removed — let us consider that not unlikely God has taken them from the evil that is to come. Let us remember what they have been to us, what ties of friendship and endearment have been mutually cherished between us, and consider that these are ties which are never to be sundered — ties which are nurtured by the remembrance of the past and the anticipations of the future, and which, as subsisting between the redeemed of the Lord, will be confirmed and perfected “in that day when He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

Reflections like these are suited, I must think, to establish our wavering faith in the wisdom and propriety of God’s dealings with the children of men; and may they serve to soothe the sorrows and comfort the hearts

of those of us who come here this day stricken and afflicted of God. The event, dear relatives and friends, which we had hoped God in his mercy would avert, he has seen fit, in his holy and all-wise providence, to bring upon us; and having here in his courts duly recognized his hand in this affliction, and sought consolation from his word and through the prayers of his people, we go to lay the remains of her whom we esteemed and loved in the rest of the grave. It is painful to think of the wide chasm which this event has occasioned in the circle of her relatives, and especially of the desolation which it has made in that house from which she is now withdrawn, no more to return. It is sad to consider how early in life she has been removed, what schemes of domestic enjoyment have been broken up, what fond hopes blighted. Sad is the remembrance of those "wearisome days and nights that were appointed her." But we sorrow not as those that have no hope. We think with pleasure on the patient and unrepining spirit with which she received the chastisements of the Lord. We recall the solemn and emphatic manner in which she deplored her past unprofitable life, the earnestness with which she sought the light of God's countenance, and that the hope in Christ which she cherished might not fail her, but be strengthened and confirmed. We think of the undissembled seriousness and composure with which she yielded herself to the disposal of God, and of the good remembrance which her mind cherished, in almost its last conscious moments, of those institutions through which Christian benevolence is diffusing the blessings of life and salvation among the needy and neglected of our race. But we trust that she has now found what she sought, a rest and a portion for her soul in God. With these remembrances, then, let us comfort one another in

this season of affliction, and together let us adore and magnify the mercy and grace of God. And finally, let us heed the solemn and impressive admonition which we receive through this event, and strive each one of us to be prepared to join that happy and fast widening circle of kindred and friends who are already present with the Lord. Amen.

## SERMON XVI.

LIFE, AS RELATED TO THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.<sup>1</sup>

“WHILE WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN, BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN; FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL, BUT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL.”—2 *Cor.* iv. 18.

ALLUSION is had in this connection to the difficulties and trials incident to “the life that now is,” and, at the same time, the source of those healing, strength-renewing virtues is indicated, by which the soul is sustained in its conflicts, and nurtured for the more perfect endless “life that is to come.”

Especial reference is doubtless had in the context to the sufferings and wrongs inflicted on the disciples of Jesus in that age when Christianity first entered into conflict with “the powers of darkness.” Summoned to the defence and propagation of the gospel, against the licentiousness of Paganism on the one hand, and the exclusive spirit of Judaism on the other, the champion of the Cross became at once the central point on which the enemies of the faith, from the whole circumference of human errors and delusions, exerted their fierce and relentless hate. Hence the apostle speaks in his own person of being “troubled on every side; perplexed, per-

<sup>1</sup> Baccalaureate, Burlington, 1855. The last public discourse of President Smith.

secuted ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

The sufferings arising even from this source, though they acted with a consuming force upon the victim, causing "the outward man to perish," are, nevertheless characterized as "light afflictions," and of but momentary duration. With all their intense and crushing weight they appeared trivial to the sufferer in the light of that surpassing glory which was "revealed from faith to faith." And though mortal life was the measure of their endurance, yet, as contrasted with the abiding and immutable of the unseen world, they vanished like moments from the face of time.

The important transitions incident to human life when new and untried fields of enterprise are to be entered and unwonted cares and responsibilities assumed, especially when the youth is about to exchange the quiet retreats of study and pupilage for the strife and buffets of a life of storm and unrest, become, to a mind prudent to foresee evil, fit occasions to inquire for the great secret, if one there be by which life's course may be safely guided, its temptations resisted, its sorrows and sense of wrongs assuaged ; and not only this, but the whole of life's experience, sad and dark as it may be, made to contribute to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Such an occasion is now before us, and the text offers a theme not inappropriate to it, inasmuch as it treats of human life under its most natural aspect of difficulty and suffering ; inasmuch as it exposes the fallacious nature of all things sensuous and earthly to soothe the anguish of an afflicted spirit ; inasmuch as it affirms the reality of an ever-present, spiritual world open to the intuitions of faith, as the material is to the perceptions

of sense; and, finally, asserts the sufficing nature of the unseen for all the exigencies of the soul, causing "all things to work together for good to them that love God."

1. Human life contemplated as a state of difficulty and suffering. But let us not cherish a spirit of ingratitude and discontent in allowing ourselves to speak disparagingly of the state to which Providence has temporarily assigned us. Indeed, what ingenuous mind can contemplate the present abode of man, the myriad sources of enjoyment with which it is supplied, the surpassing beauty and glory of its adornment, the innumerable contrivances to mitigate its inconveniences, or render them ultimately compensative, and the immeasurable amount of happiness with the slightest possible degree of pain which the outer world is fitted to administer to a race of sinless beings, without unutterable emotions of adoration and praise?

But in our estimate of the divine goodness, as shown in the structure and arrangements of our present abode, it is not to be concealed or forgotten that sin, under its darkest and most hateful type, has become an element of the human soul. The earth, through the forbearance of God, is tenanted by a fallen race, grovelling and selfish, cherishing a spirit of discontent and unthankfulness, living without God in the world, and in its most cultivated and refined ages characterized in holy writ as "hateful and hating one another." Nevertheless, the curse of offended justice and of outraged mercy has not stricken to the root of all that is beautiful and lovely on the earth and spread over the face of paradise the blackness of hell. We still trace the footsteps of Infinite Love among the abodes of the sinful and self-abandoned. The light and the shower, the gentle dew and the



health-restoring breeze yet visit the earth; and on every hand and at every hour we hear a Father's voice inviting, and behold a Father's hand stretched out to welcome the children to him "from whom they have revolted."

But though God has not left himself without a witness to his forbearance and kindness towards sinners of our race, at the same time who is not a witness to himself, and what age has not left its testimony behind it, that human life is a scene of difficulty and suffering? Plans are conceived to be thwarted, hopes are cherished to be blighted, riches are coveted which never become ours, or they vanish like the bird of passage, or descend the inheritance of a curse to ungrateful heirs. So, too, a name and reputation are laboriously built up to be unappreciated and soon forgotten; affections are wasted on unworthy objects; sickness poisons the fountains of life or strikes down the loved ones at our side. To men of all generations there are times and seasons when the confession of the old patriarch meets an universal response in the human bosom, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

Diversified as is the life-experience of men, there is, notwithstanding, a general resemblance in it all, as in the features of the human countenance, establishing in the one case the unity of the dispensation to which all are subject, as in the other the identity of the race. The diversity in the divine dispensation towards individuals of similar desert has ever proved a dark problem to thinking men, and the only satisfactory solution it seems to admit of is to suppose a future state of rewards and punishments, in which the inequalities that exist here may be corrected and even compensated.

The distribution of good and evil, of happiness and misery, may be found, perhaps, on examination, to be

less in reality than in appearance. Honor may cause its favorite to repose on a bed of thorns ; riches not seldom enslave the sons of affluence, and devour, as doth a canker, all the pure and elevated sentiments of a once noble soul ; while contentment, peace, and "all holy charities" adorn and gladden the abodes of obscurity, penury, and toil.

But though divine allotments are diversified and even disproportionate to relative desert in our present state, nevertheless it would be insane for mortals to look for exemption from disappointment and sorrow "in this the house of their pilgrimage." That "man is born to trouble," is the reflection of the most profound observer of human affairs. Unclouded may be the prospects that open on the youth of thy life, and strong the impulses that beat at thy heart, and bright the guiding-star that allures thee ; but remember, O young man, "the days of darkness for thee are many." Light and gallant is the bark that leaves the port, and auspicious the breeze that fills the canvas, and brave the heart of the mariner ; but reflect, thou voyager of the ocean of life, that the deep thou darest is vexed by storms, and its shores made infamous by wrecks, and how few and fortunate are those who, having outrode all tempests, are at last seen, wearied and worn, toiling into the haven of their destination. Beautiful, indeed, but no less just, are the words of the old prophet to his young companion in peril and persecution : "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not ; for behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord."

2. The insufficiency of things earthly and sensuous to meet the wants and soothe the troubles of an afflicted spirit. In the general description of "things which are seen," the apostle no doubt embraces not only material

objects, but the manifold incidents and relations which serve to invest the outer world with an air of life and interest. Man, whatever else may be said of his capabilities, is by nature a creature of sense. The first objects that secure his notice are those of which the senses of the body take cognizance. And in this provision of Providence there is a manifest wisdom and even necessity which strikes the mind of every one who considers the order in which the human faculties are developed and brought into use. These external objects, acting upon the organs of sense, supply the first occasion of the mind's self-consciousness, the knowledge of its own being, and of the various susceptibilities and powers with which it is endowed. The pains and pleasures we first experience arise from our connection with the world without. The sufferings we most dread, the gratifications we most earnestly crave, are derived from this source. And what, as it regards the unreflecting period of infancy and childhood, is a law of nature to us, becomes, by force of habit and a cherished disposition, a controlling power over us in the after-periods of life. At a time when the instincts of nature should have yielded to the teachings of reason and the authority of God, we still find man obedient to his senses, and in eager pursuit of what can administer only to the real or factitious wants of his nature. He has respect to "things which are seen."

But when the apostle affirms the existence of a power to overcome the difficulties and soothe the troubles of our present state, and build the soul up unto eternal life, he cautions us not to seek for it in the objects of time and sense. Our present afflictions, he says, seem light and momentary, so long as we look not at the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are

temporal. Perishable objects may administer to the fleeting and the transitory, but the cravings of the immortal can be satisfied only by that which liveth and abideth forever. We are accustomed, indeed, by perverse habits of thought, to annex the idea of substantive being and permanence only to things of outward form, and which occupy space, and hence to regard all objects as unreal and delusive, save what act on the outward senses. The earth we tread upon, the upheaved rocks which form the mountain barrier between hostile nations, the massive bodies of light which hold their place in the firmament and blaze on unchanged through the ages, we reckon among the things that are fixed and abiding. In like manner we persuade ourselves that the gratification which flows from sensuous objects is of a nature that is unfailing. We can hardly conceive that the events of life should cease to interest; or that riches and fame, that gayety and pleasure, should lose their power to charm. But this rule of estimating things the Scriptures entirely reverse. What we regard as substantial and abiding, the word of God treats as shadowy and transitory. It likens all things seen to the "vapor which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." It speaks of the material world, with all its garniture of beauty and grandeur, as a glory that withereth like the flower of the field. It announces the coming of the day when these heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and no place found for the earth and the sea.

And who that considers the structure of the external world, and how much its phenomena and general appearance depends on the mechanism of the eye that beholds it, can marvel at such representations as these. Whether we contemplate matter under the atomic or dynamic theory, it is manifest that the disturbance of a

few simple, imponderable forces would reduce to a chaotic state all that now appears so massive and enduring. In like manner, if, by a change in its mechanism, the range of the human eye were to be extended to that of the telescope, or diminished to that of the microscope, how instantly should we cease to recognize the world with which we are now so familiar! Objects which are now seen would become invisible, and those which are now to us as though they had no being would occupy the whole field of vision. All existing proportions and combinations, out of which arise our ideas of order and beauty, would disappear, and all present objects of taste give place to such as are now without form or comeliness.

Such is the world without, as philosophy contemplates it, utterly dependent on invisible forces, or on the accident of human organization — the passing shadow of the real and abiding, of the unseen and eternal. How preposterous, then, to seek in the seen and temporal what can administer to the spirit of man, whose essence is immortal, whose capacity is limited only by the infinite, and whose yearnings and whose agonies are no less profound and awful than its essence is mysterious!

Nature, with the myriad objects it embraces, has indeed a worthy purpose and a predetermined end; and these, for the most part, find their fulfilment for man in the wants they supply, in the growth and development to which nature administers. She has bread for the hungry, and water for him that is athirst; goodly sight she proffers to the practised eye, and sweet melodies to the ear attuned to song, and choice materials to employ the skill of the cunning artisan. But nature is the correlative of *nature*, not of the spirit. Nothing in her humble storehouse sufficeth for what is rational and

divine in the human soul,—no food to nourish it, no balm to heal its wounds, no light to guide it when awakened to the earnest pursuit of all truth and excellence, no words of deep significance to inspire its hopes and teach it assurance as it looks into the dark and troubled future of the eternal world. Surely it is not within the sphere of things seen to perform this high ministry to the immortal soul; “for the things which are seen are temporal.”

3. The text affirms the reality of an ever-present, unseen world, subject to the intuitions of faith, as the material is open to the perceptions of sense. The “things not seen,” of which the apostle here speaks, are not the abstractions and generalizations which occupy the sphere of human science, but vital essences, living energies, “things of the spirit,” existing, not by the will of man, but in virtue of their own intrinsic excellence and the ordinance of God. Moreover, they are not things into a belief of whose existence man reasons himself, as by a process of analysis or deduction he reaches the conclusions of science. Like the objects in nature, they are things also to be looked at, contemplated with sure and open vision, though with mortal sense “we touch not, taste not, handle not.” It is a spiritual world, as contrasted with the sensuous; a scientific or ideal world, embracing not only a superior but a peculiar order of life and excellence, and forming a true and adequate correlative to the spirit in man, as the external world answers to whatever lies within the sphere of the animal.

Now, such a world, filled with objects of “spirit and life,” is essential to the very idea of spirit in man—that capacity which exalts him above the beasts that perish, a power to apprehend what the eye hath not seen nor

the ear heard, — a world of elevating, solemn, glorious truths which the soul hungers and is athirst for, and in the presence of which the earthly and the sensuous vanish like day-dreams, leaving the soul to the free and joyous communion of what is kindred to its own true and noble self.

To inculcate with authority on a benighted race the reality of such a world, and to give its living energies access to obdurate minds, was an important purpose to be fulfilled by the gospel. Hence our Saviour opened his mission upon earth by calling the attention of men to "the kingdom of God," and especially to the consideration that it was near them, "within you," or in the midst of you. He would divert their anxieties from the face of the sky, the omens of good and evil in the world of sense, and teach them to contemplate "the signs of the times" — symbols of far deeper significance, and opening up to the soul a treasure of imperishable wealth. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," an aliment suited to whatever we have in common with those whose spirit goeth downwards, "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." What stirring words are these for beings grovelling among things that are seen, and yet conscious that they have within them the germ of a higher life, and were born for nobler pursuits! What gladsome words to a weary soul that has long wandered in search of rest and found none! What life-giving sounds to one who has felt the anguish of a sin-stricken soul, and whose only hope is in the mercy of God!

The kingdom of God, it is conceded, is represented in Scripture by words and phrases which denote futurity, as, for example, "the world to come, of which we speak," "the powers of the world to come;" but this language

is to us significant only of what is expressed in the text, "The things which are not seen are eternal." In asserting the future of the spiritual, there is no denial of a present. Doubtless a more perfect and impressive manifestation of the unseen is yet to be looked for as we, under the Christian economy, enjoy a more glorious revelation of the same than was vouchsafed to patriarchs and prophets of earlier dispensations. The day indeed cometh when "we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known."

Moreover, the terms which express futurity to things not seen are manifestly intended to convey the idea of permanence and immutability, as contrasted with the changeable and transitory, which belong to things seen. While all things visible shall wax old like a garment, and vanish away, the unseen objects of faith—"the world to come, of which we speak"—will never cease to be what they now are. God and his glorious attributes of justice, truth, and love—the principles of a moral economy, inclusive of a righteous law and a personal, accountable will; a Divine Providence, holiness, and sin, as the unavoidable conditions of rewards and punishments—are ideas which impress themselves on the human mind as intrinsically necessary and eternal. They are limited to no time or locality. They have neither beginning of days nor end of years.

Here then is a world, all-surrounding and ever-present, of which the visible is but a faint and shadowy representation, and in which man is fitted to live and move and find his only true being. To him who walks by sight and not by faith, who "loveth not the truth, but hath pleasure in unrighteousness," mists and darkness may veil the glorious realities of the unseen and eternal. Nay, it is said of a man merged in carnality, that he



“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The things of the Spirit are open to the eye of the spirit—the flesh seeth them not; and this inward sense needeth exercise to discern both good and evil. Faith, like the power to perceive external objects, is the organ of communion between the soul and the things of God, and, like the latter, is a sure and reliable source of knowledge. “We believe,” says the apostle, “and therefore affirm.” Knowledge of substantive being must in all cases be resolved into immediate intuition—a belief. We perceive for ourselves, or credit the testimony of another; and both perception and credence in human testimony are acts of intuition. No man reasons himself into a belief in the existence of the outer world, as no man can reason himself out of such a belief. He must perceive it, as the condition of having even a notion of it; and the conviction which enters into the perception is that which no man can repudiate, and of which no wise man affects to give account. We look out on the objects in nature,—on the fields in their beauty, the undulating crest of the mountain range, the shower that makes glad the earth, the star that alternates its morning song and evening hymn of praise,—and as we behold, we believe, and doubt not. The truth, so far as it can be to us, is evidenced in the belief itself. It lies in our minds as a conviction, sharply and deeply cut, but of which no ulterior account can be given. So, too, faith is an intuition, a beholding of things not seen; and the conviction that what we behold is both real and abiding enters into the very essence of the intuition, and is traceable no further. Faith thus becomes, in this as in all other cases, the beginning of all true knowledge, as it is the end in

which all knowledge culminates and is lost. Hence it is defined by the apostle to be "The substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

4. The text affirms the sufficing nature of the unseen for all the exigencies of the soul. The true secret by which the world, regarded as a scene of difficulty and trial, of temptation and sorrow, is to be overcome, lies in the habitual contemplation, the steady beholding of things eternal. This habit of beholding things not seen renders the afflictions of this life light and momentary, and even makes them conducive to an eternal weight of glory. Hence the apostle elsewhere denominates them vital energies, "powers of the world to come." And again he says, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

To a soul rightly attuned there is a harmony in divine things which, like the concord of sweet sounds falling upon the ear, allays the irritation which the strifes of this world engender, and takes from sorrow the sting which worketh death. In the things of God—his own ineffable perfections, the wisdom and beneficence of his providence, the stability and grandeur of his truth, the beauty of holiness, the fitness of his law to the spirit in man, the high and glorious communings of spirit with spirit, and of all pure spirits with the God and Father of all—there is a power of attraction which surpasses the beauty of all earthly forms, and the grandeur of all earthly symphonies. And thus do "we all, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, become changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Moreover, from the antagonistic character of the powers with which nature and spirit are severally endowed, and the superior excellence of the latter to the former,

a state of tranquillity and repose attends the contemplation of great and worthy objects. This is true, even, of whatever is lofty and grand in nature, when contemplated by "the mind of the Spirit." The unseen and eternal are symbolized in the seen and temporal, and the finite becomes blended with the infinite. When the Spirit asserts his prerogative, and enters "within the veil," sentiment takes the place of passion, and the unquiet bosom, like the deep unvexed by storms, subsides into a state of rest and repose. Such is the influence which the simply grand and lofty has over the human mind. And how will the effect be enhanced when nature puts on the spiritual, and the temporal assumes the awful aspect of the eternal! How enviable is the experience of him who is conversant with the moral power of prayer, with "the peace passing all understanding," which comes over the soul wearied with the strifes of earth, when conscious of the presence and glory of things unseen, and leaning with confidence on the bosom of Him who inhabiteth eternity! This is the Spirit doing homage to whatever is great and excellent in spirit, the finite reposing on the infinite, the creature made joyful in its dependence on the Creator.

Once more: the "world to come, of which we speak," is rendered attractive, not only by all that is great and pure and lovely in truth and moral sentiment, but by those vital affinities which bind together "the whole family on earth and in heaven." "We are come," writes the same apostle to those who were under "trial of their faith," — "we are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the First-born, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant." It is a broad

domain of life, intelligence, personality, sympathy, that lies open to him who walks by faith — a mighty throng of witnesses encompassing his path, to cheer him in his conflicts, and beckon him on to the prize of his high calling. The worthies of all past ages — the holy patriarchs and prophets, the noble company of martyrs, the benefactors of our own time and country, with the savor of whose names the earth is still redolent — are there rejoicing in their abiding rest and inheritance.

Such are the powers of the unseen and eternal to develop the hidden life of the soul, to make it strong in the conflicts of earth, and endue it, amidst all trials and sufferings, with the peace of God which passeth knowledge.

And what more striking example of the sufficiency of the unseen and eternal for such ends than is supplied in the life-experience of Paul the apostle? A youth of rare endowments, and nurtured under the best masters in the learning of the age, we behold him emerging from the restraints of pupilage to espouse the waning fortunes of the national faith. With a capacity for bold and magnificent schemes, an energy to baffle all difficulties which lay in his path, an eloquence which alike swayed the rude minds of the populace and made princes tremble in their seats of power, he planted himself athwart the new movement, which threatened the extinction of all that was venerable in the religion of his fathers, infused vigor into the faltering councils of the nation, and became at once acknowledged as the master-spirit in those turbulent times. Never till now had the Christian faith encountered such an aggressive force as was wielded by the single arm of this young man, and for a time she stood appalled as she beheld her ranks recoiling and breaking up before the fury of

his assaults. With such gifts and aspirations, earth promised to withhold no eminence of fame or power from his grasp.

But while pursuing the opponents of his country's faith with a zeal that carried terror even into foreign lands, suddenly a vision passed over his mind, and he sunk to the earth, overpowered and subdued, exclaiming, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From this moment the whole current of his life was reversed. New objects of surpassing interest burst upon his mind, and, girded with the same indomitable purpose as before, he entered on the pursuit of them, but with a spirit attempered to the docility and gentleness of Him who had led him out of darkness into light. Things seen and temporal had faded from his mind, like dreams and shadows, before the deep and solemn convictions which the unseen and eternal had awakened. The one great purpose now engrossed his thoughts by day and by night — "to serve his generation by the will of God," and to be "accounted worthy of Him who had called him unto His kingdom and glory." With a zeal that burned but did not consume, he cheerfully pursued the path of his mission, through privations and weariness and peril, regardless of scorn, imprisonment, and stripes, anxious only to "finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received to preach the gospel of the grace of God." Many and long years of service and suffering had at length made inroads upon the outward man; nevertheless, girded with might in the inner man, he "bates not one jot of heart or hope," but holds on his way, a spirit of fire, the light and joy of the myriads whom he had won to the hope of the gospel. At last, when the time of his departure was at hand, he put on record that noble confession which men on earth

and in heaven "will not let die." "I am now ready to be offered. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course and kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day." Well may the man of such experience speak of the "powers of the world to come," and commend their virtue to the generations of a miserable race, as alone adequate to the exigencies of the soul.

It only remains, in fulfilment of my purpose on this occasion, to address a few words to the class that is about to graduate. .

The hour of separation, my young friends and pupils, is now at hand—the hour that terminates the daily interchange of courtesy and fraternal kindness among yourselves, and withdraws from our walks and places of concourse the forms we have long been accustomed to greet. You go forth, some of you no doubt, with a feeling kindred to that of the pilgrim of old time, "not knowing whither he went;" and all of you, I trust, with the rational conviction that life is a scene of difficulty and hazard, where all that is manful and heroic in purpose, united to all good counsel and vigilance, will be put in requisition. And we counsel you to go forth with "heart and hope," confiding in a Power, which, if duly invoked and devoutly cherished, will enable you to overcome great difficulties, and change even untoward events into elements of ultimate success. Accustom yourselves to hopeful views, both of men and things, reflecting that the world takes its aspect and shades less from its essential qualities than from the temper of mind with which it is contemplated. That adverse events will cast their shadows upon your path, that favorite schemes will be frustrated, and fondly-cherished hopes

disappointed, you may rationally anticipate. But the cloud passeth away, other schemes will occupy the imagination, and new and perhaps brighter hopes dawn on the future.

We have contemplated, on this occasion, "things which are not seen," an order of Providence underlying and shaping the order of "things seen," where all that is real and abiding, all that is true and truly excellent for the soul has its abode,—the heavenly city, with its peopled myriads; the temple, which needeth not the light of the sun or the moon, "but where the glory of the Lord is the light thereof." Here are powers concealed that are adequate to all the exigencies of the soul—to nourish and give it health, to guide it into safe paths, to provide strength and courage when it falters, peace when in trouble, and rest when it is weary.

And now that an occasion is upon us that will return no more on the earth, receive from the lips of those who have been your teachers and guides the parting counsel, that in all the concerns and vicissitudes of future life you cherish the habitual and earnest regard to things unseen and eternal. In this wide realm of spiritual truth and life and beauty, let the spirit of your own mind seek its morning and evening and noonday walks. From these mines of exhaustless wealth let it gather a treasure that waxeth not old. In this region of all that is pure and serene and lovely—this true home of the soul—let us seek repose from the buffets of a rude and turbulent world, and from these fountains of a higher life draw into it those living waters which will nourish it unto life everlasting.

And now unto Him who hath brought you thus far on your way, and preserved your ranks unbroken by death,—to the only wise God, our Saviour,—we affec-

tionately commend you; devoutly imploring that he will still be your refuge and guide, and that after many years of manful exertion for truth and righteousness among men, he will gather you all together into that city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Amen.



## THOUGHTS IN AFFLICTION.

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[THE following lines, composed soon after the death of President Smith, having accidentally fallen in my way when the larger part of this volume was in press, find a fitting place next to his last public discourse. It is believed that they will be of interest to the friends of the family, and not without their consolation to those bereaved like their author.—C.]

From every murmuring thought and word,  
From trembling doubts and fears, O Lord,  
    In thee I seek relief;  
Thy love can heal the broken heart,  
Thy presence holy peace impart,  
    And soothe the mourner's grief.

When all thy billows o'er my soul  
Their dark and fearful waters roll,  
    And tempests veil the skies;  
When Faith, though guided by the Word,  
And steadfast promise of her Lord,  
    No star of hope describes:

Then, 'midst the darkness and the storm,  
Help me to see thy blessed form,  
    Thy gracious accents hear;  
Still hold in thine my trembling hand,  
While o'er the waves, at thy command,  
    I walk, and know no fear.

Where shall I fly, but to thy breast?  
O, where find succor, solace, rest,  
    When earthly comforts die? —  
When on my pathway, once so blessed,  
So long by cheerful footsteps pressed,  
    Thy sore bereavements lie?

The love that life's best blessing gave  
Will not withhold the boon I crave,  
    If sought in faith sincere;  
That to his sovereign will divine  
I may, with childlike trust, resign  
    That gift to me most dear.

I thank Thee for the life of faith,  
The "peaceful confidence" in death,  
    The patient hope serene,  
That o'er the sick and dying bed  
Their sweet and hallowed influence shed,  
    To bless the solemn scene.

I thank Thee for the gifted mind,  
The spirit, noble and refined,  
    Upright, sincere, and just —  
For all the traits of manly worth  
That marked his daily walk on earth,  
    And now embalm his dust.

I bless Thee for the truths he taught,  
With light and life and spirit fraught,  
    With wisdom from above,  
Unfolding, with persuasion rare,  
With earnest zeal and fervent prayer,  
    Thy messages of love.

And while I praise Thee and adore,  
The crowning favor I implore,  
That I may bless thy rod,  
And through earth's conflicts, toils, and strife,  
By thy rich grace, my daily life  
Be "hid with Christ in God."



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